THE SPIRIT OF FRANCE

OWEN JOHNSON

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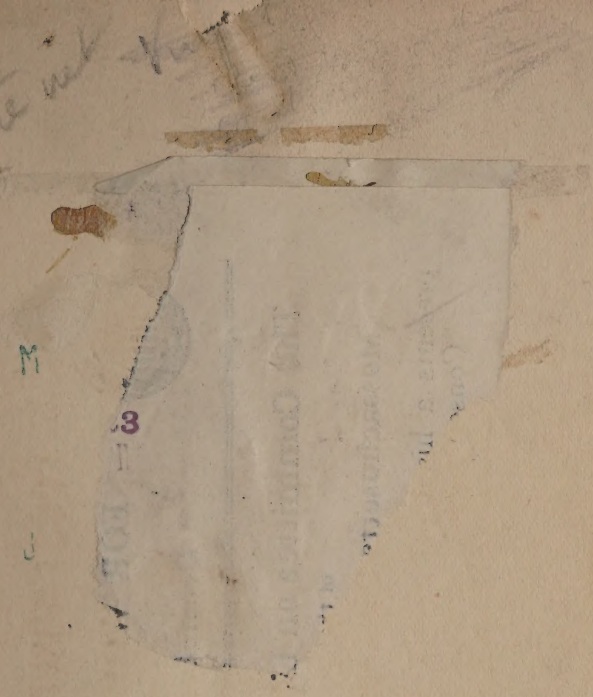
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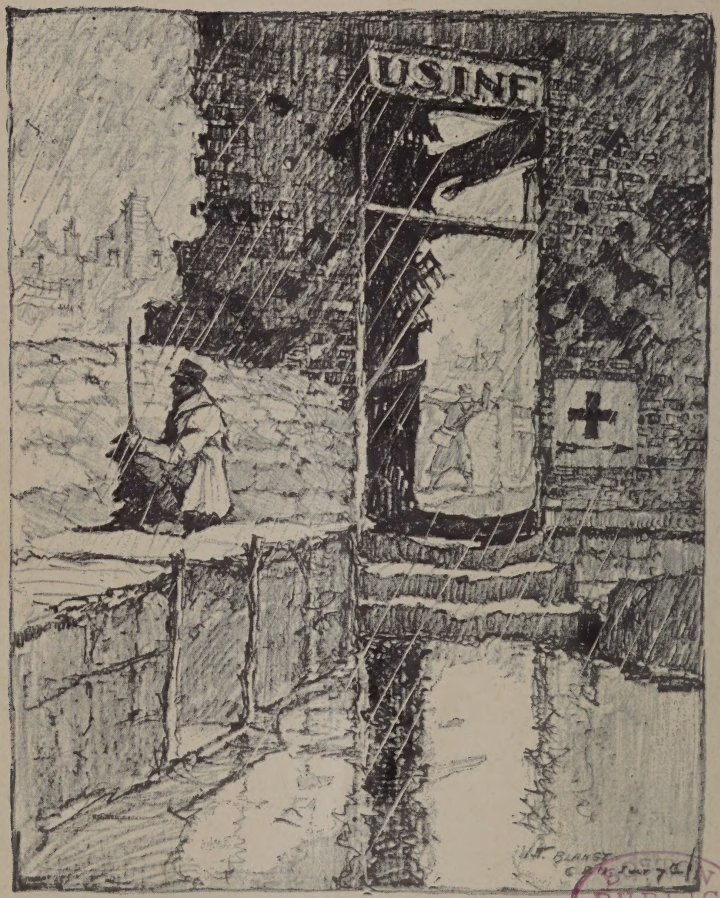
THE SPIRIT OF FRANCE



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IN THE BREWERY AT BLANGY. *Frontispiece.*
From the drawing by Walter Hale.

THE SPIRIT OF FRANCE

BY

OWEN JOHNSON

WITH DRAWINGS BY WALTER HALE
AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

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FRANCE CONSECRATED TO WAR

THE SPIRIT OF FRANCE

CHAPTER I

FRANCE CONSECRATED TO WAR

I REMEMBER vividly the night before our arrival at Bordeaux. The portholes were blinded, the lights extinguished in the saloons. In the sealed smoking room, by the flare of one smoky lamp, groups were preparing to pass the night.

We stood on the forward deck, eagerly straining our eyes into the darkness to catch the first glimpses of the shore lights. For the last hour the night had trembled under strange, furtive glares. Were we accompanied by silent iron escorts, sweeping the mysterious waters with suspicious shafts from their cyclopean eyes, or was it simply the electrical disturbances in the overheated sky?

We waited, still straining ahead in the moist, errant night breeze, feeling the imminence of the stricken land ahead, as though a black curtain were interposed between us and France, country of shocks and sorrow, wondering what the morrow would bring with the rolling up of these tragic folds on the stage of cruel reality. I remember how acute was this sensation of dramatic suspense, and now that the journey was ending I felt almost a shrinking before the parting of the last veil, fearful of the spectacle which would present itself to me of the France which I had known and loved.

For, when I had thought of France, I had always thought of it as the happiest, fairest land on the earth's surface. I remembered it with the eyes of my early school days as a fairyland of childhood, where fragile, childish illusions were affectionately guarded from the soiling, crushing weight

of life's struggles and realism. I remembered it as a land of disciplined beauty, of bright colors, of flowering window; a land of friendly animals beside blue-bloused charioteers or running between the wheels in zealous loyalty to man. I remembered its many-tinted fields, its long, military lines of poplars marching by the white, smooth roadsides; its tranquil canals, so shaded and so peaceful; its great-hearted peasantry, singing and laughing, neither miserable nor oppressed, but free and rich, reveling in the beauty of nature and the joy of living.

I knew it, above all, for its love of generous and glorious ideas, and often, knowing it with a more intimate affection than those who, in the quest of some new literary alchemy, sought only the psychopathic analysis of the frothy, mongrel mixture of all races and all parvenus that fatuously believe themselves the voice of Paris, I had pas-

sionately defended them from those of my own people who saw only the green, passing scum on the surface, and knew nothing of the deep, clear depths below.

Yet, even with this reverent faith, that night on the threshold of the great test, I wondered—a little fearful. The nation of the freest, happiest people on the face of the earth had arisen to the test and performed a miracle—but after? Would the intelligence continue as firm as the imagination? Would its resolution remain as heroic, after the long, grinding months of soul exhaustion? Would there be any weakening before the long task still ahead, the spirit of sublime sacrifice relaxing into an easy self-deception lulled by the sophistry of a present peace, an armistice which would mean the doom of republican ideas before the rise of a barbaric efficiency tormented by the fanaticism of predestination?

Even if the answer to all these doubts

were a glorious affirmative, would the sight of open wounds and a sorrow-ridden country be so vivid that the abiding impression I would take away would be one of ineffaceable melancholy and depression?

All these thoughts crowded into my imagination that last dramatic night, waiting there in the darkness, feeling the undivined horizon growing gradually closer, as scattering pin-pricks of light swept toward us above the mystery of the sea, until shafts of light belched out from a dozen lighthouses and our ears awaited expectantly a following crash, as though these flashes of human lightning must indeed be followed by the roar of cannon-ridden Europe.

My first impression was, as I had feared, one of overwhelming sadness. The winding, incomparably beautiful approach into port, through historic vineyards running to the water's edge, combing the fields with their green ridges; faint, ancient lines of

château and church spire; fair villages in red and white trappings; languid barks with colored sails—all were meaningless in my eagerness for the human note.

Everywhere such an absence of youth and sturdy manhood! Children and old men, and, everywhere, women! Such multiplied, insistent black blots of mourning against the rich, young green! Nearer the city, over the docks—and through the streets, this absence of men disappeared; only the world seemed uniform, waiting for a bugle on the air to herd together, to take shape and march endlessly away.

In the station everything was swallowed up in this military note—a churning, curdling meeting of the waters. The long train was filling up with fresh red corpuscles to be pumped through the life veins to the menaced front. The confusion of uniforms was like the babel of tongues—dark-blue coats, blue-gray, khaki, red trousers, and the

olive green, sweeping folds of the Zouaves; officers in smart, pearl-blue shell jackets, and others gray and seared with service; bearded, ragged privates, with young, boyish faces.

In this bustle of departure, side by side, was the sobering spectacle of destiny in the worn and stricken figures of the wounded —men on crutches, limping on canes, heads bandaged, arms in slings, an empty trouser leg or a sleeve pinned up, crossing and recrossing those whose turn had now come to face the inexorable cast—those who looked at them steadily, thinking their own thoughts.

Through the young and the maimed a dozen white-robed, charming silhouettes of the ministering nurses of the Red Cross flitted in their busy tasks, bringing the wounded to rooms for temporary bandages, cutting away soiled cloths, substituting fresh, clean ones. In the dark station, so

serious, so grim, and so quiet, with its sudden military groups in shadow, these white-robed figures of young women had something so noble and so healing in the grace and dignity of their presence that they seemed to move amid the stern and unlovely grimness of war as the ethereal vision of an artist.

The train moved out to its long flight over the stricken land. A general and a young sergeant came into my compartment. The first feeling of sadness which had come over me, like a quick intake of the breath, or an uncontrolled rush of tears to the eyes, now deepened as the memory of the crowds remained. Something had gone out of France for me—the laughter and the bubbling joy of life, which used to rise in high-pitched notes of excitement in every pleasant crowd. There was no paltering of illusions here. What had passed had struck too deep; what was coming lay too near.

Out of this pervading desolation, one im-

General Ferry, one of the brilliant younger leaders, in a typical communication trench.

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WALTER HALE AND THE AUTHOR.

pression detached itself, unexpected and gratefully surprising. Though every detail was martial to the eye, the note of militarism was strikingly absent. There was no heel-clicking and clocklike saluting. Generals, colonels, captains, non-commissioned officers, and privates brushed by each other in the utmost simplicity, as though in the present necessity the etiquette of parade was too trivial to be noticed. With the growing sense of a nation's sorrow, there came side by side this dawning comprehension of the spirit of France in the perception of the fraternity and democracy in these armies of a republic.

In the dining car we sat down, a party of four—a general, a plain soldier, and an under officer—without the slightest feeling of unease, the general answering a chance question I addressed to the private, scrupulously and politely offering us the first opportunity at each dish passed. This utter simplicity was too natural to be even noticed

by them; it was an impression that was never to leave me, a feeling of the sympathy, charity, and the kinship of a great stricken family.

At every city, General X drew my attention to converted factories, the red flare of furnaces leaping out of the obscurity, stacked heaps of iron tubes rising like honeycombs.

"Shells for the front, for our busy little 75s."

"And there are many women at work there?" I asked, perceiving, to my surprise, in this feverish insect activity, the faces of young girls.

"At least half, sometimes more," and he added reverently, "what women!"

The region of vineyards fell behind. We entered a Land of Canaan, of glorious harvests. Never have I seen a more crowded land. Down to the iron boundary of the roadbed itself came the swarming fields of

wheat and oats, crowding the smooth white roads, as though poised to swallow them up in the mad, leaping joy of production. Not a plot of ground, not fifty feet square, but was doing its duty for the sons who loved and defended it. The fair land of France itself seemed fighting for its armies in this gold and green output spilling over the land —these young generations of the soil coming eagerly forth, like the young generations of men that would grow up to defend their homes in future tests.

Through the mellowing wheat the poppies drenched the field in sanguine stains—a vision of far-off battlefields! As deep as we could see, ceaselessly, beyond each succeeding horizon, this golden flood rolled gloriously away, rustling like a calm sea caressed by zephyrs, seeming to overrun everything, inundating the land, submerging clustered trees and farm-houses, while tiny villages far off seemed to sink beneath the rising tide.

Through this pervading abundance were dotted active, sombre spots of human beings, like thronging bees, tireless and greedy. Only, when seen close to, a generation was missing! Young women, wives, mothers, the old folks—so old and so bent at times that movement seemed impossible—the children of 6 to 7, boys of 14 and 16; but of men in the mellowness of age, not a sign! Men there were, dotting the banks at every clustered hamlet—but bandaged, or on crutches —their duty done, or struggling back to strength and a new summons.

At every station at which we stopped—great city or village of a hundred souls—it was the same story—soldiers, healed, or soldiers recalled, returning to the front, and, by their sides, women in black. Never shall I forget the look on the faces of those women, turning away to hide the coming tears, or standing immovable as images, staring sternly ahead, dry-faced, seeing visions,

imprinting in their memories a last look to bear down the empty future.

At Poictiers, a score of boyish figures in clean, grayish uniforms, were sprinkled in the worn crowd of shaggy veterans. I passed close to them. They were the recruits of 19, going off to their years of preparation, serious, exalted, boyish in face, standing apart to listen to the last calm words of exhortation from black-clad mothers who had given so deeply of their human store, so unflinching in their loyalty, so ready to give until the end, to keep the fair name of France untarnished! Already, through the tightening at my heart, there had begun a sense of exaltation, a surging pride in human nature, looking on these boys of 19, so reverent and so earnest before the sudden summons to manhood and the privilege of dying.

The wounded passed us in long trains from the front, the compartments choked

with soldiers back for a few weeks' recuperation in the open homes of the south; other cars, significantly quiet, with glimpses of immovable bodies stretched among the straw. On these faces of men who had lived among the dying and seen death pass a hundred times by their side there was an expression in the eyes such as I had never seen. It was as though what they have looked upon had been so hideous that the memory haunted them still, leaving every nerve quivering with a supernatural fright. At times on a young face this expression was like a child's—a child in its first conception of sorrow, vaguely conscious that such a thing as death exists, frightened and trying to comprehend what this thing must be.

At Poictiers, a group of young wives with their children had come into our compartment. They were in black, even to a golden-haired little girl of 11, on whom it seemed to set so heavily. The mothers began instantly

on their work of rolling bandages; each had from ten to twenty convalescents quartered in her home. Hour after hour the same panorama unfolded—at every step, a man departing, a woman remaining behind, her handkerchief to her eyes. Throughout the whole land there seemed to be but two uniforms and but two colors—drab war and black resignation.

At Paris—the gay, joyous, electric city I knew—my first impression was of great multitudes suddenly hushed and sobered, a quiet, profound silence, yet, over all, a pervading calm and an inflexible resolve. Imagine, if you can, a whole nation confronted by the certainty of death on a fixed date; that irrevocably in one month it must perish, one and all, and how, face to face with the final reckoning, it would set to work to prepare itself; the stillness and suspense in the soul, the wiping out of earthly vanities and petty contentions under the awed sense of a

common fate. Imagine that, and you will realize the impression France made on me that first day.

For several days this sensation continued. Paris seemed like one great family united in a common grief. Bright colors were so completely absent from the avenues that it seemed a world in drab; even the courtesans, in restaurant or trailing the street, were sombrely attired in black or dark-blue tailored suits, without a suspicion of coquetry in hat or blouse. In the restaurants, where formerly a profligate cosmopolitan society had spilled its wealth, I seemed to be dining in a railroad restaurant; not even a dinner jacket was to be seen among the men, not a display of jewelry among the women, or an attempt at décolleté; no gayety and no laughter; conversation in low-pitched voices, as though solicitous of the feelings of those who might be in grief beside them.

At 10 o'clock, and a clearing of tables,

chairs stacked for the night, a sudden fall of darkness over the streets save for a few picketed lights shaded against the approach of Zeppelins above. The walk home, up the Champs Elysées, seemed indeed a ghostly voyage through Elysian fields, with bodiless shadows whispering at our sides. Above, in the clear night, as we looked, suddenly a star seemed to detach itself from a constellation and come sweeping across the sky like a comet of destruction, then a whirr like the buzzing of an enormous darning needle; and we realized that aloft in the night a sentinel was keeping watch over Paris.

Gradually, however, as I began to see underneath the surface, passing behind a hundred scenes, I perceived that this was not a life of stagnation, but a swarming existence of consecration. By the end of my first week in Paris the feeling of depression had completely disappeared, never to return again. Instead, I found a rare exaltation of the

soul, a happiness at discovering unsuspected beauties in our common humanity. The feeling that remains to-day is one of thankfulness to have been privileged to live in such moments, to have known the heroism and the devotion of which men and women are capable.

This Paris was an orderly Paris—a strange city, without violence and crime, where women passed unprotected on their errands of mercy, along ill-lighted streets and parks of darkness, over obscure bridges looking down on the Seine, that flows like a river of the dead, passages that a year ago, even under a thousand searching lights, would have exposed them to insult and violence at every step. In the gray of the coming morning, now, instead of revelers returning after long nights of dissipation, women of the best society, old and young, cross each other with the early passage of the milk wagons, released from long vigils at the

hospitals, or arriving for a day of ministering to the suffering.

We went one night into the Folies Marigny on our way home—a lugubrious, revealing experience. A quarter of the orchestra was filled; a sprinkling in the gallery. One would have thought the crowd assembled for a memorial service. A mimic impersonated a dozen of the popular heroes—Foch, Gallieni, French, and the idol of the nation, Joffre—result, not the slightest outburst of high-strung enthusiasm; a generous round of hand-clapping, nothing more. The game was not a game for children, nor could they be tricked into children's displays. Each spectator had the look of having made up his mind never to return again. In this former centre of frivolity, frivolity slunk away, crushed and defeated.

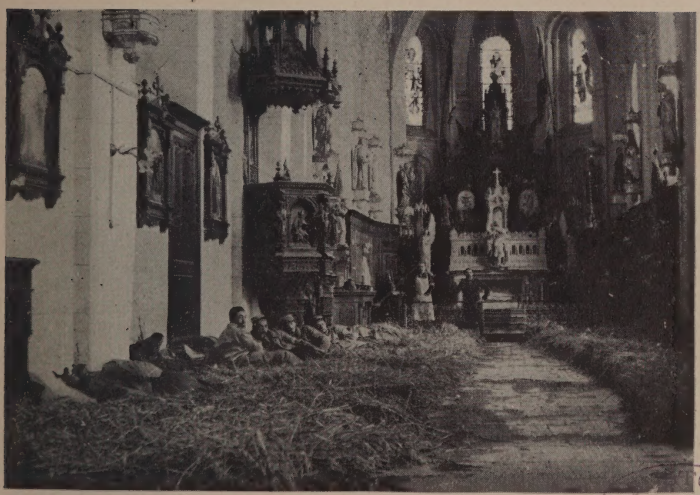
At each hotel, at each department store, a great tablet was displayed of the employés who had gone to their duty, and underneath,

the record of each—wounded on such a date; mentioned in general orders; promoted; a prisoner; dead on the field of honor. Along the Champs Elysées, by the Punch and Judy theatres and the merry-go-rounds, the children seemed to have come from one vast orphan asylum. Yet this open and reverent display of mourning gave a national solidarity, a feeling of unity in sorrow, that ran through all ranks and made the individual loss perhaps easier to bear, as it unified the inflexible determination to win in the end.

How many times during these ten days' waiting to go to the front, on visits to hospitals, depots for écloppés, national dinners, ateliers of great shops, maternity reliefs, a dozen ouvroirs where women in hundreds were sewing for a bare 1.50f. a day, did I receive the invariable answer to my question:

"And, after all, no flinching? The war must go on?"

First Arras drive. German prisoners.



A chapel transformed into a hospital.

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SECOND DRIVE IN CHAMPAGNE. GERMAN PRISONERS.

SECOND DRIVE IN CHAMPAGNE. THE BIG BAG OF GERMAN PRISONERS.

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"Till it is ended, once for all, Monsieur. We must think of our children."

"And you have not lost courage?" I asked involuntarily, moved at the spectacle of this patient toiling that hardly paid for the daily bread, which had gone on now such long months.

A mother gave me the answer—a mother who had given one son already and had another at Arras, in the bloodiest trenches.

"We women must keep up our courage, Monsieur, to encourage our men."

Not even America so ardently loves and longs for peace as France—peace for her children! Yet not a woman in the throngs I questioned gave me an un-Spartan answer. So inflexible is their pride of country, so consecrated their resolution, that if a ministry should attempt to betray France with an illusory peace, in the absence of men, the women, I believe, would rise and make a revolution! I will quote but one of a hun-

dred letters shown me, without comment, for comment would be futile. It is from a mother to the head of a great ammunition factory, where her two sons have been transferred from the front to give their trained services.

I have just learned that you have asked the Superintendent to keep my sons away from the most dangerous experiments in the charging of the shells. I can't tell you how offensive this demand is to me. I consider that my sons should go where there is the most danger to be incurred.

They should do so, first, because they are the nephews of one of the owners. Their duty is to give an example of courage to the employees who may be haunted by the memory of the terrible catastrophes which have taken place lately, which were the result of the inexperience and imprudence of those who were directing the operations. They should assist in all such experiments, even were they more dangerous than they are in reality, because my sons are soldiers.

You know that I only consented to advise their leaving the front because you assured me that their presence in the factories would be more important than in the trenches, and that there would be certain dangers to be met. The first accident that occurred at the factory decided me to grant your

request. I beg of you not to change now in any way the duties of my sons.

When war was declared I foresaw clearly all the sorrows which would visit us, and I promised myself that I would give my children an example of courage. My daughters will not see me overwhelmed by misfortunes; my sons know with what pride I have seen them and wish to see them face the worst dangers.

Sorrow has visited both you and me already in its cruelest form. Do not let us ask for pity. Let us go to the end of the Calvary without flinching.

I will not give the signature, for in justice, if I gave it, it should be signed—

ANY MOTHER IN FRANCE.

THE PROFANATION OF RHEIMS

CHAPTER II

THE PROFANATION OF RHEIMS

FOR the last week, the obsession of the front trenches had been growing over us. Of the unconquerable tenacity of an awakened people and its clear, reasoning perception of the necessity of a decisive result, cost what it might, I had convincing testimony in a thousand directions. Gradually I had seemed to be approaching nearer and nearer the actual shock of the battle line.

I had begun to catch the spirit of the Army of the Republic in the dozen visits I had made, under the guidance of Dr. Pozzi, through the crowded corridors of the Val de Grace, and many improvised hospitals. The resignation and abnegation of these mutilated victims, facing life as a long, distorted struggle, without reproach or recrimination,

impressed me with the magnitude of the self-sacrifice, which could count nothing as against the life and honor of the nation. At Aubervilliers, at two depots of the écloppés, I came even nearer to the grim actuality.

A great, improvised camp was tenanted by over a thousand soldiers back for a few weeks' recuperation. A group of thirty came in as we arrived—a group physically exhausted, with shattered nerves, and yet with an unquenchable spark of bulldog tenacity in their faces. They seemed drunk with sleeplessness, in need of a moral recuperation, as though the body had been too weak for the exaltation of the soul. For, remember, that until the 1st of July these men had stood like rocks in the trenches, without a furlough.

Through canvas-roofed barracks, from crowded halls lined with beds, we passed into a great factory converted into sleeping quarters for the hundreds whose period of

rest being completed, were ready for the summons to the front. There was no excitement, no boasting, no hilarity—it was a grim and oppressive stillness. A list had been posted of those called, and the crowd huddled about the placard, reading the names. Twenty-four hours later they would be back under shell and shrapnel.

I examined them curiously, feeling that here, if anywhere, among those to whom death had passed so closely, there would be signs of flinching. There was no bombast; the same grim feeling of duty was everywhere. What must be, must be.

At a second post we found a contingent of three or four hundred, re-equipped, waiting to entrain. Here, the certainty of going seemed to have released the spirits. Everywhere were groups, young and old, black, coffee-colored, and white, discussing the war, laying down their theories of attack and defense. A cluster was listening to a Spahi,

laughing at his voluble, childish French, as he expounded his theory of war. He wished to suppress the marmites (high explosive shells)—each side. The fight should be man to man—then they would see! Even hand-to-hand—give them only rocks, and they would drive the Germans into the sea!

He was good natured, but quite excited at the teasing from his comrades. He began again from the beginning, while I listened seriously. Then we shook hands. I was to see him again at Notre Dame de Lorette, passing in a company of Spahis. Here the morale was astonishingly ardent. In fact, the nearer we approached the front the higher we found the courage, imagination, and devotion of the troops.

A dozen friends of mine, recuperating from wounds or on forty-eight hours' leave, fired my imagination with personal narratives of actual warfare. Those just back from the front seemed possessed with a

frenzy of excitement, with an obsession to return, that brought me more and more eagerly to the days set for our first trip in the general direction of Rheims.

At length the day arrived and we were sent forward to Epernay, a party of four, under the guidance of Captain X. of the General Staff, and even before we realized it were out in the station, ready for our first view of the front, which for the last weeks had so often risen before our imaginations in the vivid narrative of a returned friend.

At last, in automobile, we were rushing forward through the heart of the champagne district; through green valleys combed with vines; over the straight white roads where once, in the faltering days of mid-August, the German horde had poured, their tramp, like the iron fall of mechanical monsters, stamping domination and terror, whole villages lighting their ghostly advance. Again, a week later, they had returned; but

this time in sullen, uncomprehending retreat, at a speed quickened by the terror of some unknown, withheld disaster, while beyond, over the crest of the fruitful slopes, in a breathless frenzy, the youth of France came surging in pursuit, the great Revolution reincarnated, triumphant and glorious!

To-day this quiet, immaculate, disciplined country lay under our eyes, unshaken under this double shock. Now, on the threshold of actual war, our imaginations invoked the spectacle of those rapid, miraculous days; of the long trains garlanded with flowers, rising out of one horizon as another went thundering beyond the eye, running ceaselessly through a sleepless land, bearing the ready and impulsive youth of France singing on their way to the sacrifice; the exalted women lining the voyage in a surging, sublime unity of soul—incredible days, than which not even the great, patriotic outbursts of the Revolution held more self-abnegation.

With these dramatic high-lights in the memory, I wondered what my impressions would be in the face of the actual—the laborious war of to-day. For every great human or national crisis has its moment of immense dramatic significance, beyond which even the greatest tragedies relapse into a certain human routine. What would be the attitude of the warm, mercurial French temperament toward the now present necessity of cruel and unlovely self-discipline, of inglorious patience and abrupt and unseen death, denied the compensating trappings of martial glory? What would be their resolution in the face of a lingering conflict, the attitude of these laborers in the field, these soldiers in the very front trenches, condemned to underground prisons for month after month?

These were the questions which we put to ourselves, not without a little fear, wondering if this first trip would leave us with the

rising spectre of German domination or convinced of the unshaken determination of a republican nation to survive or perish, proud and unafraid.

Already the sense of something new was about us. In every village was the repeated military note—the silent, grim concentration of reserves, territorial battalions returning from a day's work, a house spattered with shrapnel holes, a broken wall here, and next to it a wall that was once a house; and among all these quiet, uniformed crowds women and children, clinging to their homes, at their daily work, unterrified. As village after village succeeded, quiet and unamazed, I could not contain my astonishment at the fullness of the civilian activity.

"How far are we from the front?" I asked our guide, Captain X.

"Ten kilometers."

"And the women and the children are still here?"

VIEW OF THE BATTLEFIELD BEFORE RHEIMS.

The Germans hold the heights on horizon.

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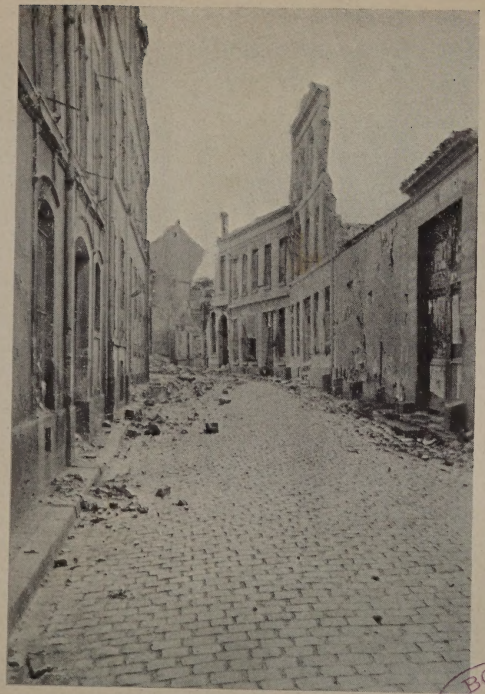

Typical street directly back of cathedral.

In shattered Rheims.

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"Wait," he said, with a smile. "Later you will see something very curious. Now look—Rheims!"

From the crest of the final hill a great, flat panorama spread out. In the distance, to the left, above a herding of houses, something bleached, deformed, and bleak towered over desolate Rheims—the desecrated cathedral. Along the rolling horizon faint lines chalked against the green extended mile on mile, as far as the eye was free to see.

"The trenches, French and German."

I continued to stare at them, incredulous that there, in the spread of the quiet June day, lay such petty scars of the immense deadlock that ran from Switzerland to the sea. Yet these far-off, almost indistinguishable earthy scratches somehow changed the import of the sky. I began to understand the feeling of ominous quiet which had been gaining on me, the feeling of something un-

usual about to take place, the quiet that pervades a village on the eve of a holiday or a city during the funeral of a great man.

A moment to pay our respects to the General in command of the sector, General X., gaunt, silent, as most of the leaders whom we saw—all soldier and nothing else; and we were off again for a birdseye view of the sweeping battle front. Only now, as we were in reach of the German guns, we left the main road and crowded through alleys, that were never meant for our rude shock. Again the feeling stole over us of hiding from some one—some one unseen but alert—the feeling of being watched, constantly watched, by some one, somewhere.

The cars stopped under safe shelter, and we went forward for the view to Château X. Our officers conferred and decided that we should remain on the esplanade. We could have gone up into the upper stories, but it was not very safe. The precaution

seemed a little excessive. It is true that we had passed a great, ugly, gaping hole at the foot of the terrace, lately made by one shell; but even then it did not seem possible that our presence could be noticed at such a distance. Later on we hastily revised this judgment. A screen of trees protected us. We looked out, adjusting our field glasses. Rheims was a little nearer, and yet only a spot in the great plain. The green land, like the green sea, spread out to the horizon, where it rolled up into a long, undulating surf. Through our glasses, the ugly, chalky scars came out of the west, and traveled eastward, for all the world like pipe drains. Other communicating trenches came wriggling down the hills, boyaux, through which at night men would come stealthily down; the shifting guard; the provision carriers; or the wounded returning on stretchers to the back. We looked, unable to comprehend it, greedily seeking some sign of life, one hu-

man touch to visualize what we knew must be there. I turned to X.

"How many men are there, both sides, in all that we can see?"

"Seventy to eighty thousand."

Eighty thousand men before our eyes, swallowed up by the earth, relentlessly locked in fratricidal hatred!

"And shall we be taken there?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Into the very front trenches?"

"The very front, yes," he answered with a smile.

That gave us a thrill.

"Always as calm as this?" said one officer to another.

"Nearly always. But then, of course, it may break out at any time."

That meant calm in a military sense, of course—only a score of distant shots in the brief moments we were there—a score of white clouds suddenly released; sections of

earth and human beings, perhaps, flung pell-mell into the quiet of the calm June day.

What fighting there was went on with hand grenades or bombs out of a trench mortar. Rifle fire in this warfare plays small part; cartridges are all very well for machine guns, but for men, hand grenades and the long steel. From this spectacle we looked down on a more incredible one. Below, in the full sweep of the firing zone, regimented fields of heavy vines extended two-thirds of the way to the front, dotted with occasional huts and a note of moving cattle and directly in front of us, a hundred dresses —women moving among green things!

"What! They work here, they dare to?" I exclaimed.

Captain X. nodded.

"When a bombardment begins, they lie down on their stomachs. When it's over, they get up and go on with their work. You

get used to all things. Certain batteries have habits, like men; they fire at certain hours, a certain number of shots. They get to know them. They adjust their life to it, that's all. There is no lack of courage there. Occasionally one is killed."

We went back by the hole that a shell had torn into the ground. It had a different look already—a rather disagreeable and impressive hole, big as the entrance to a cave.

"Quite a hole."

Captain X. shrugged his shoulders.

"The best about it is, when one lands, you won't know it."

Later on, we were to learn from personal observation what such explosions could mean.

On the way to Rheims there was a bad bit of road to pass, under direct exposure to the German batteries, so that we were cautioned to keep well apart. A few days before, I had lunched with the Minister of Fine

Arts, and he had spoken bitterly of how powerless he was to prevent the work of desecration. He had not even dared to erect scaffolding, in order to remove the few fragments of treasured stained-glass windows that remained, relics of the Middle Ages, priceless as jewels, for fear the Germans would completely demolish the Cathedral under pretext that the French were using it as a point of observation. He asked me to note for myself the absurdity of their contention that the cathedral had served as a shield for cannon.

Despite every precaution to remove these monuments from the slightest suspicion of military utility, the Hôtel du Ville at Arras was now a crumbling mass of ruins; the cathedral at Soissons under implacable bombardment equally doomed; while at Rheims not a week passed without a scattering of shells. Nothing has sown more bitterness in the French mind than this incomprehensi-

ble destruction of the treasured monuments of the past. A thousand men dying under the barbarism of asphyxiating gases are nothing to burning Rheims and Soissons; for what is being destroyed there is France itself.

Sentries began to multiply, springing from every intersection of the road, out of every cluster of houses. A quick-flung countersign as we sped on, with only a momentary slackening, the last long exposed stretch of road, a final burst of speed, and we entered the city by the Vesle Canal, passing gingerly over a temporary bridge. To our right, half a dozen canal boats, sunk by shell fire, were turned lumberingly on their sides. Dozens of others, herded together, seemed like leviathans awaiting destruction. But for this reminder, we would hardly have known that we were in a city every portion of which was in the firing zone. Life was everywhere, shops open, people moving bus-

ily and unconcernedly, unexcited and resigned.

Again, out of precaution, we left the cars and proceeded on foot. Suddenly, ahead, down a long, deserted street, strangely hushed, the front façade of the cathedral appeared. Grass had overgrown the cobbled approach, every window was shattered, on every wall sprinkled scars of shrapnel and gaping holes; the desolation so complete, in the air such a hollow stillness, that it seemed as though a cyclone had passed.

At first sight the cathedral came to us as a surprise. Architecturally it seemed unharmed. Only when we entered the square, under the looming shadow of the great façade, buttressed with logs and sand bags to the height of forty feet, did we realize the devastation of the bombardment and conflagration, the effect of some suspended body that at a distance still shows a human outline and which only on approaching you per-

ceive is a corpse horribly incinerated, a skull under a hat, hideous and yawning.

For the first time, gazing at the white calcined walls and the broken statues, we comprehended the mutilation that has been wrought across that fairy screen; a once transcendingly beautiful face, robbed of its beauty by a cowardly dash of vitriol. Inside the impression deepened. No photographs can adequately visualize what has been wrought.

The great roof, reduced to ashes, had broken through the vault in spots; an interior stripped bare; two-thirds of the great stained-glass windows, the pride of centuries, reduced to dust. A vast profanation had been wrought; something that these ancient, mellow windows held from a ruder world fled forever, a whole history gone—the spirit of the Middle Ages, the heart of France, the France of Jeanne d'Arc, with the pomp of Kings and ancient legends!

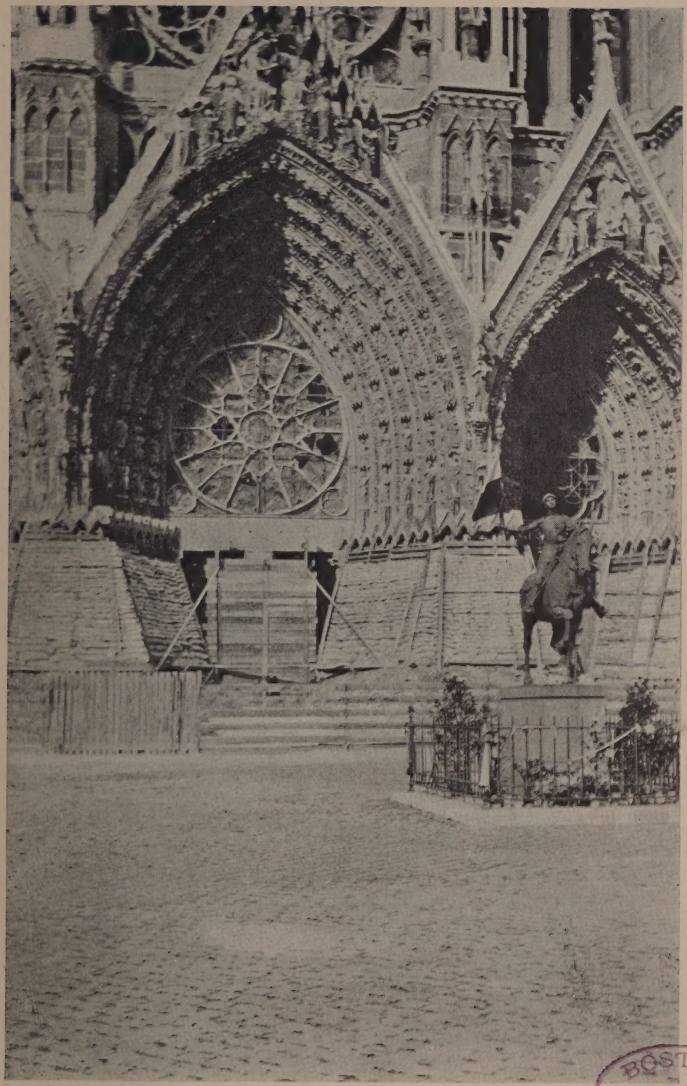
Rheims, as a living echo of the past, is gone. What remains is only a monument.

Yet to-day there is an ever-present danger that this monument, too, will disappear. For the cathedral is under intermittent bombardment, as we were to learn by actual experience. It is completely at the mercy of the enemy, who seems to vent his irritation in constant brutal reminders; who can destroy it utterly in an hour, whenever a forced retreat should rouse in him the passion of a last vengeance. Black as has been the stain upon the pages of history of this desecration performed, Heaven grant that the final chapter may not be the willful and futile blotting out of the ornamented past, as the conqueror has done at Arras and is doing at Soissons! As for military excuse, it would be as practical to place batteries here to shell the German lines as to station cannon in Wall Street for a bombardment of Harlem.

No one who has visited Rheims can have

the slightest illusion as to the original deliberate intent of the Germans to reach and destroy the cathedral. The ruined quarters run as ruthlessly and mathematically in the line of the German batteries to the cathedral and stop at that apex as though they had been razed by a giant scythe.

If the colossal massiveness of the cathedral walls has saved the shell, the buildings at its side have been literally blown to pieces —the Palace of the Archevêque, with its historic Hall of the Kings. So complete was the spectacle of disemboweled houses and naked walls revealing strange, profane intimacies, that whole districts seemed to have fallen down like the walls of Jericho at a single trump. We passed through street after street, littered with crumbling blocks, showers of glass, shreds of curtains. We peered down, not blocks but regions of ruins, in exaggerated distances, as tree trunks multiply the idea of depth. The destruction was



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THE STATUE OF JEANNE D'ARC, UNSCATHED DURING THE BOMBARDMENT, PROTECTING THE BASE OF THE CATHEDRAL AT RHEIMS.

THE HALL OF THE KINGS, NEXT TO THE CATHEDRAL.

EFFECT OF ONE SHELL DURING BOMBARDMENT OF RHEIMS.

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too complete, the human note so entirely banished, that we seemed to be looking rather on a cataclysm of nature that had certain grandiose elements—a modern Pompeii.

Yet, strangest of all, we had but to cross the street to find life going on as usual; families, with the spectacle of havoc and desolation at their finger tips, clinging to their homes with a strange fatalism we were to find everywhere, a belief unshaken in human hope, that the forces of death and destruction that play about them are destined for others and not themselves, a feeling that increases with each escape. The children even share this strange contempt for destiny. The moment a shell falls they rush from their cellars in a scramble for the coveted trophy. Many are killed thus, without the slightest effect upon the others.

A desultory cannonading was going on, far off, but still filling the air with its weird

electricity to our unaccustomed ears, reminding us that this was not a record of the past, but the ominous menace of the present. The spectacle of children at play, running at their games down the distant ravaged vistas, or staring out at us from underground quarters with queer little rat-like faces, was an incongruous note. What a strange, distorted conception of the universe must lodge in these growing minds, trained in the daily spectacle of death, beginning their amazing voyages in the mysterious fairyland of knowledge in goblin schools in underground cellars! For school, like every other activity, must go on, even twenty feet below the surface of the earth, in caverns from which the rats and vermin are momentarily expelled by the flicker of oily lamps.

The instinct for life is indeed so strong that it returns to constant conflict with the forces of death and devastation, just as obstinate, just as greedy. A block that has

been shelled a week before is to-day occupied, swarming with life. A great dry goods store, with the upper floors blown away, bedraggled curtains drifting through the shattered windows, had reopened; women in sombre dress, defiant and reckless, at the counters serving the same returning customers. Among these indomitable scouts in the army of life I remember an old woman, still selling her postcards at a shop that a miracle had spared. Gazing out from the quiet door at the rolling torrent of broken walls and scattered masonry I asked, amazed:

"What, are you not afraid?"

"Afraid? What is the use, monsieur? After all, death is an experience you do not have to go through twice."

We left in time to return to our headquarters, with a feeling of leaving a life that we could not comprehend in the least. It seemed as though we had not been visiting

Rheims of today, but Rheims of the Middle Ages, when war was an accepted state of existence, and women and children were taught to look more steadily and stoically into the face of death than we moderns, who organize our existence in an almost fanatical disbelief that life can end, always surprised and frightened when the spectacle obtrudes.

From Rheims to Epernay we passed several villages partly destroyed by the Germans in their terrorizing tactics of invasion, particularly Marfaux, where the Germans had set fire to everything, under the pretext that an aviator had been shot by the inhabitants.

From Marfaux we continued until over the hills Epernay sprang into view, a magnificent panorama of vineyards and slopes —Epernay, where, a little to the south, Foch, at the memorable battle of the Marne, flung his army between von Büelow and von

Haussen and crumpled the Germans up, in the most brilliant operation of the war.

"No wonder the Germans want such a country as that," said Captain X., grimly, as we stopped for a moment to view the spectacle.

We found ourselves quartered in a little hotel of the third class—a hotel for commercial travelers. We asked our landlady about the Germans. They behaved very well, it seems. They drank up all the wine and paid for nothing, but for Germans they were quite exceptional.

Benoit, the boots, had a story to tell us. He was at Rheims during the German occupation, attached to a hotel where the officers were quartered. On the night before the evacuation they drank up everything they could lay their hands to. Two officers, a Major and a Captain, too drunk to accompany the rest, were left in his care, with orders to be called at 5 o'clock. At 4 o'clock

they were up, astonishingly sober, and in a hurry, quite frightened at the news that the city had been evacuated during the night. Without waiting for breakfast, they started down the street. A pony cart, carrying a man and his wife suspected of German leanings, and equally in a hurry to escape, crossed their path. Despite protestations, the officers forced them to dismount, and, taking their places, started across the square. Midway a volley rang out, as a detachment of Zouaves burst from cover. The horse and the commander were killed instantly. The Captain, horribly wounded, cried from his knees:

"Pardon, camarades, I have three children; pardon."

With which grim detail in mind, we went to bed.

We were back at Rheims by 8 o'clock the next morning. Shortly before, the Germans had bombarded the cathedral with five

shells. Before going forward, we were taken back of the cathedral to witness a hole made by a German 155, which had landed in a garden scarcely thirty feet from a flying buttress. It had fallen an hour before our arrival, and the street where we stood was covered with its fragments, two of which I picked up and brought back with me.

"But why should they bombard it now?" I asked, at loss.

Our guide laughed, shrugging his shoulders. The ways of the Germans are incomprehensible to the French mind, but they fit their own reasons to them.

"We took a line of trenches from them, probably, toward Arras or in the Vosges; that—or too much beer."

IN THE TRENCHES

CHAPTER III

IN THE TRENCHES

WE started for the village of Betheny, which lies in front of Rheims, like an island in a sea of fire, joined to the city by three kilometers of long, winding communication trenches or boyaux. Gradually the houses thinned out; marks of recent bombardments began to appear—a wall rent asunder, a heap of stones prone across our path.

The cannonading approached nearer, with a new, personal significance. We saw no more civilians, but instead, at every corner, sentinels carefully masked. The broad highway to Betheny lay straight ahead and deserted. Even before we left the outskirts of Rheims, we had disappeared into a protecting boyau. About six feet deep at first,

it continued to sink into the yellow, oozing earth, until the top soil rose above our heads. Sprays of clover, coarse grasses with occasional ruddy splashes of poppies, brushed our faces, as we traveled as the insects travel, our feet splashing through occasional pools of water, the boyau turning and twisting, wriggling on in serpentine coils.

"Why don't they run straight ahead?" I asked.

Captain X., who took a military delight in enjoying the sensations of civilians, called back cheerily:

"It winds so that if a shell lands in the boyau it can't get more than a few—some of us will get out."

This was a great comfort and we passed the word back.

The boyau led through mounds and cellars, out through the last refuse heaps, and once in the open country, deepened and widened. We were eight feet below the high-

way, running parallel to it, always in a snaky, twisting course. By our side the trees that lined the road were barked and split, broken and twisted by shells, the foliage singed by the iron passage. We crossed under railroad ties and fell into a maze of avenues and cross streets, all scrupulously inscribed: "Allée to the Tenth Division," "Direction of the Fourth Battalion," etc.—very much like the ambitious plotting out of a great land speculation. An occasional glimpse at the nearing enemy, lifting our heads cautiously over the banks, parting the grasses to gaze at slopes where German batteries are stationed at Brimont to the right and at Viry to the left, near enough to show their clustered wicked lines of barbed wire, and we reached the shelter of a banked railroad.

"Attention! Open space," called back our guide. "Cross quickly in twos and threes."

We passed alertly over an open space of twenty yards to the security of the next boyau, a little incredulously. Shells were booming to the left, around Brimont. Captain X. pointed to a German stationary balloon straight ahead.

"Lucky if they don't see us and warm us up later."

We met a group of soldiers returning with shells and picks, who answered our greetings gayly, as though welcoming this evidence of the outer world. Lines of trenches appeared, carefully prepared against all eventualities, with thick barb wire entanglements in front. In the distance roofs, or rather what had been roofs, rose above the grasses. Another warning, another quick break through the open, and we were at last in the village of Betheny. For the first time war was an actual fact.

Ahead of us the village ran straight on for a mile, camped on either side of the cobble

street. Everything above our heads was torn to shreds, roofs sagging and lurching to the ground, mere flimsy skeletons, stripped of shingles. Everything below our eyes was organized with mathematical exactness. Barricades of cobble stones broke up the straight line of the road every thirty yards. Every courtyard, every room, was buttressed with symmetrical rows of sand bags bristling with preparations that in case of assault would turn every room into a fortress. A strange contrast, this: above, devastation and ragged masonry; below, precision and order.

Lieutenant X., a short, wiry little man, working as if on springs—"L'Homme Electrique," as the soldiers had named him—took us in charge. We crossed a score of fortresses, where yesterday had been peaceful homes. Every foot had been fought over, taken and retaken, until the ultimate mastery. In every courtyard, through

every open door, were detachments of Chasseurs-à-pieds, lounging at rest, ready, alert, and waiting. The atmosphere had something of the charged, slumbering intensity which marks the interior of a great newspaper office, where any moment of the night or day a clicking of the wire may galvanize every energy with the news of a great disaster.

An occasional phonograph trumpeted a military march. A sound of rollicking voices surprised us. We stopped to investigate. Two soldiers on a platform were rehearsing a cabaret song for the evening's entertainment. Against the wall a great placard announced:

"CASINO DE BETHENY
PROGRAM FOR SATURDAY
NIGHT."

At the next turn the tangled ruins of what once had been the village church were lit-

erally spilled across the square. Inside was the curé, in black surplice, bearded and bronzed, a militant, ascetic type of missionary, clinging indomitably to his duty. What a havoc within! The roof had gone first; next, the north wall; then the west one.

The altar had been moved from corner to corner, until now it had found a cramped resting place under the last fragment of ceiling, in a little region cleared among the sprawling débris, while great rents opened outward into the blue sky. Still mass went on; still the altar was crowded with flowers, under a crude colored lithograph of the Apostle of Peace. We stood reverently reading the inscription, "The Heart of Jesus will save France." The curé stood, nodding and smiling, at our side. I do not think he saw anything heroic or unusual in the spectacle that thrilled us. To have told him what we felt would have seemed an

impertinence, in the simplicity of this consecrated life. We went on.

We reached the front houses—advance posts for the sharpshooters—hearing for the first time the angry, stinging sound of bullets swarming above us. I climbed up and gazed through a carefully screened aperture at the German trenches now scarcely a hundred meters away. What a desert! Men might be there, herded behind those impassive lines of dirt, but the prevailing sense was of a vast loneliness. And war has come to this: to deal death and to receive it, and to see nothing!

Cautioned to speak in whispers, we went more quietly toward the very front trenches, winding through boyaux that were deeper and cleaner, with yawning holes descending into bomb-proof shelters. All at once we were at our destination; a picket standing erect and vigilant, neither turning nor moving a muscle at our approach, glance im-

movably set through an observation hole at the German trenches fifty meters away. Above was a heavy covering of sand bags, and within this long, coffin-like structure a dozen men were lined, in silent waiting, on a bench, above each a charged rifle, resting at position. The only view into the outer world was a narrow slit, scarcely a foot high, commanding the broken, shaggy field and the cruel rows of barbed wire entanglements. Beside each man was a prepared mask for protection against poisonous gases, and near by stores of hand grenades.

Beyond we passed into a chamber prepared for a machine gun, a marvel of secret, midnight construction, undistinguished in the long, flat line, the aperture protected by a green canvas, which was raised only at night. We entered several advance posts. Across the disheveled, overgrown fields the looming German trenches circled around the brave little village of Betheny, like some

monstrous boa constrictor coiled to strangle it in its embrace. A brave little village, jauntily defying its enemies!

Leaving the front trenches we returned to the village for a more intimate examination, winding from court to court, surprising groups at luncheon. At our approach a running fire of command rang out:

"A vos rangs! Fixe!"

In a second every chasseur was at attention, straight as an arrow, chin in the air, bearded as the lion's tufts fall from the maw, glance fixed, hand open and flung out from the temple like a flag in the breeze.

Never shall I forget the proud fierceness of the chasseurs-à-pieds of Betheny. In all the troops I saw I think they were the finest human beings I have ever known—men whom it was good to have met and to remember. There was something savage and feline in their eyes, a look of wild animals

startled out of their rest. Explosions in the air seemed to have brought explosions in their souls, too, that blazed forth in their glances. And with it all there was something very pure and reverent about them, a feeling of consecration to a noble ideal. They seemed to live in an exalted atmosphere, something absolutely divorced from the world—the futile world back into which we were forced to return—in that state of grace which is the preparation of a soul for its final answer to the Almighty.

They say that men live thus from month to month and forget everything of their past life; that they even resent the intrusion of earthly reminders. Seeing what we saw, we could easily believe it. In fact, to experience this life leaves an abiding fascination, the longing to return to this consecration, so full of meaning and significance in comparison to the selfishness of individual ambitions. For many days after we were

conscious of this craving, as though for a rarer and more stimulating ether.

Commandant X., a hero of the African wars, and Lieutenant X.—his very presence seemed to charge the atmosphere with electricity—passed ahead of us, smiling and proud, acknowledging the salutes with an invariable "Bon jour, mes poilus," and the answer, returned in an affectionate outburst, "Bon jour, mon Commandant." Only those who have passed among them and known the absolute and unassumed fraternity, the affection between officer and soldier as between a father and a son, can understand the possessive affection of that "mon."

We continued our winding progress. At every turn little plots of flowers brightened the eye; an occasional mascot, treasured in a cage; a sudden playground, with soldiers turning on a bar or measuring their agility in jumps; then a moment's pause at the

Theatre of Betheny (evidently a rival to the Casino), with a piano, a stage, and footlights, even to a dressing room, with a prized mirror. A soldier, a noted vaudeville headliner, evidently, gave us an exhibition of feats of strength, lifting a comrade with one arm, etc.

We continued our tortuous, bewildering progress, past straw-strewn rooms and ready holes through which to dive into the bowels of the earth at a warning screech. For death is ever present at Betheny—poised in the unrevealing air. In the midst of a quiet day at luncheon, in the midst of a hymn at church, to attend which is more dangerous perhaps than outpost duty itself, a shell may come tearing through the air, and the rest—something hideously vacant in the earth, and a dozen lives snuffed out of existence, a dozen crude wooden crosses to be erected, with the legend: "To our comrade, dead on the field of honor."

As we left I stopped with an exclamation of surprise. Before a doorway an old woman was standing, gazing indifferently out, one of fourteen civilians who still cling to their hearths with that instinct for the home which is deepest in the French nature. Captain X. questioned her at my request.

"What, you are not afraid to stay here?"

"And where would I go?"

"To Rheims, of course."

"To Rheims? What an idea! Never. It's too dangerous over there. I prefer to stay here."

"Nothing can get her to move," said Captain X., as we continued, laughing. "That is the French peasant, all over. Nothing seems to them so safe as their own home."

This French tolerance of the passionate desire of the people to cling to the ancestral home and share its fate has many drawbacks, chief among which is its aid to the thorough German spy system. Hardly a change of

headquarters in Rheims or Arras but what it is accompanied by a speedy bombardment from German sources, proving the celerity of their information. Of course, in the regions of the batteries civilians are rigorously excluded. The Germans, on their part, have forced the civilians to evacuate their homes for five miles behind the battle lines.

We stopped at the regimental headquarters for a glass of champagne with the mess. There, while the glasses were clinking and the toast passed, "Good luck through the war," a new acquaintance told me the story of Lieutenant X., who had so gayly conducted us throughout the morning. His family were caught in the north, and lined up against the wall to be shot, because the youngest child, a boy of seven, had hidden the sword of his father when the order had gone forth to surrender all arms. His sister, newly married and about to become a

mother, had been violated by the Germans and had gone mad.

A moment later Lieutenant X. happened to raise his glass to mine. For the first time I understood what had been puzzling me, what I had been seeking to understand under all the precise and military alertness of his glance—the look in his eyes of feverish waiting for the day to square accounts.

We shook hands with regret, tearing ourselves away with difficulty from this rare glimpse of simplicity and exaltation.

"By George, I hate to think anything can happen to those fellows!" said M. to me.

That is what we were all thinking.

"All ready? Into the boyau now, quickly, two at a time!" said Captain X., in staccato warning.

The first two had barely flitted across the open space and disappeared into the protecting trench when we had a sharp reminder

of the vigilance of the German observation. A long, whining screech, and then an ugly, rocking explosion, and a hundred yards short, but in a direct line, a nasty brownish cloud curled up from the field.

"They saw us, sure enough," said Captain X. "I knew it. They'll warm us up now. Quickly, into the trench!"

A second and a third shell followed on the first, while we hastily covered the open space and proceeded briskly toward the more complete protection of the farther trenches. At every moment now the same tearing, traveling sound, and a command from an officer:

"Down in the trench—lower! Don't rise immediately after the explosion—give the pieces a good second to scatter."

Protected as we were in the narrow boyau, a shell would have had to land directly on us to cause any damage. Nevertheless, it gave us a curious sensation to realize that

we were at last under fire, to hear each whining approach and to know that each shell might be a near or far-off problem. They even tried us with shrapnel, which is more dangerous, as it bursts about thirty feet in the air and can sweep a trench in all directions. Luckily, they did not come nearer to us than fifty yards, which was quite enough for our baptism of fire.

We got back, covered with mud, after a hasty passage under the railroad bridge, that now had to us a new significance, a realization of danger. To tell the truth, I don't think, in this first experience under fire, that any of us had the sensation of fear which we had expected. The warning approach and the ultimate explosion were certainly disagreeably impressive, but we were still too new in the theatre of war to have a personal comprehension. It was only later, at Arras, when we were brought into intimate contact with all the hideousness of battle, that

we could realize the menace of these frightful implements of death. Personally, I know that at Rheims I was a little disappointed, quits for acknowledging freely that later, at Notre Dame de Lorette and Ablain St. Nazaire, I experienced a sickening horror of what might have happened.

Back to Rheims for luncheon, where we picked up Hale, who had walked off with the key to Rheims Cathedral, and for an hour was frantically sought. At the table the stories of the officers ran constantly on instances of the courage and devotion of their men—of the engineers on the locomotives, in the long, ceaseless hours of the mobilization, who answered an inquiry as to their strength, after thirty-six hours of continuous service, with, "Don't mind us; we can hold out, if only the locomotives can;" of the heroism of the telegraphers, of whom so little is reported, who charge when the troops charge, repairing their lines con-

stantly under the hottest fire, ready to take any risk; of a regimental cook, a stretcher bearer in time of need, caught between the lines on his errand of mercy and shot down, who continued to cry "Vive la France!" as each German cartridge found its lodgment in his body, flinging back his indomitable defiance, while the troops listened breathlessly in their trenches until the last volley had brought no answer, and the end.

Among these men the Germans were judged severely, the more convincingly in that they were as generous in their admiration of their enemy's courage, skill, and unity. It is impossible to talk with hundreds of these dispassionate soldiers without being convinced of the worst that has been charged against the German Army, when in the first weeks they ran wild in obedience to a carefully calculated campaign of terrorism, imposed on them as a theory of invasion by the General Staff, who

some day will have to answer to the awakened conscience of the German nation. There are certain tales that are too horrible to be set down here.

Not once, but a hundred times, did we receive circumstantial testimony of the shooting of the wounded on the battlefield, the deliberate destruction of villages, the slaughter of civilians—even to the driving of them before the firing line as a screen—the constant firing on the Red Cross (indeed, this is the testimony of every American driver of the ambulances). Added to this, the pillaging and the indescribable befouling of property over the region we traversed on our several trips to the front were brought to our notice by dozens of personal narratives. The Frenchman, with his intelligence and generosity, does not condemn a whole people. At the bottom, I believe they feel that they are fighting as much for the German people as for them-

selves, to free German humanity from the continuous yoke of the military terrorism which can so oppress the private conscience.

In the afternoon we departed to visit the artillery encampments, with the same precautions to keep to cover, and the same feeling of being watched by myriads of unseen eyes—a feeling as though the whole sky were haunted. We left the automobiles even before it seemed necessary, but we were in the region of the great masked batteries, constantly under observation by a hundred German spyglasses, seeking some clue to the hidden location of these immense engines of destruction, which defy the detection of the aeroplane itself. We penetrated an innocent-appearing grove, to find ourselves suddenly in the heart of an artillery encampment; horses tethered by the hundreds under shelters covered with boughs, battalions of men living in dugouts, carefully masked; a thousand living units,

AEROPLANE CAMP.

FIELD HOSPITAL AND STERILIZING PLANT.

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75MM. GUN FOR USE AGAINST AEROPLANES.

SOLDIER PLAYING ON MUSICAL INSTRUMENT OF HIS OWN CREATION.

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

absolutely indistinguishable a hundred feet in the air. The horses were in splendid condition, many of them from America, which I found had given invariably a good account of themselves.

Here an officer shattered one of the fictions of the war, that the life of a horse or an automobile is under twenty-one days. Many of the horses we saw had served from the first months; the same is true of the automobiles. On an average, the life of a horse, I should say, is from five to six months; of an automobile, considerably longer.

The underground caverns were about ten feet square, with superimposed bunks for from two to six men. They had been inhabited for months and were full of little, intimate touches—attempts at wall-papering, sections from illustrated papers crudely framed, flower beds before each door. Here as everywhere French humor continued its

irrepressible gayety. A shack fit for a cow was named "Villa des Grands Ducs," while a mud path was facetiously dubbed "Avenue des Champs Elysées." The soldiers were delighted to see us, eager to joke, and quite pleased at being photographed.

From here a climb of about three-quarters of a mile brought us to the guns themselves, a battery of the famous 75's, the pride of the French Army. Five miles behind the lines every vestige of military activity was as carefully buried from observation as the pickets themselves. The whole war is an immense development of Indian tactics, for the moment a camp, or a battery, or even the headquarters of a commandmant can be located everything must be moved on a minute's notice or complete destruction will follow.

But where Indians hide only human beings, conceive of modern troops ambushing enormous engines, sinking them from ten to

twenty feet below the surface of the ground, covering them over with caps of solid timber, sandbags, and loose dirt, to be sown with grass seed or spread with branches. Inside, one has the impression of firing through an enormous box with only a slit five feet wide and a foot and a half in height. Even this opening is masked by bushes and saplings. These guns fire under orders from an observation point from three to four miles in front, under telephone communication. Beside each gun is a telephone operator in a subterranean chamber for detachments of six to ten men on duty, able to fire a shot within three to five seconds after receipt of a telephone call at any hour of the day or night. The atmosphere here vividly recalled the interior of a New York fire station; there was a constant feeling of something impending, an alertness of lounging men, and the minutest calculations had been made to save the fraction of a second.

The value of time in trench warfare is almost incredible. An attack signaled from the German lines must be checked by shell fire within ten seconds after it has been detected, or it may be too late. The truth is that the artillery on either side is so impenetrably masked that the harm it can do the other is almost nil. In the long months the losses of the French artillery in the large section we visited amounted to the loss of a few lives of men who had exposed themselves outside the bomb-proof pits during periods of bombardment.

At the first sound, soldiers, even in the front trenches, disappear into bomb-proof dugouts twenty to thirty feet underneath the surface of the ground, provided with outlets and telephone communication, to await the end of the bombardment, ready to reappear at the beginning of the attack. Despite the constant rain of projectiles that goes on, the only possibility of definite re-

sults is in the concentration of from 600 to 1,000 guns brought to bear upon a limited area, so completely to plow up the ground under a harrow of steel that no trenches can keep their formation nor any human being survive. There remains, of course, the question of the moral stimulus to the soldiers, of the sensation of constant attack and vigilance.

Before an attack a long preparation for the infantry charge must be made by a bombardment of the opposite trenches that sometimes lasts over two days, the object sought being the overturning of the trenches so as to effect the dismantling of the dreaded machine guns. At the moment of the attack the artillery range is extended 100 to 150 yards behind the trenches to be taken to prevent the rushing up of the enemy's reinforcements. This co-ordination of the artillery and the infantry has to be carefully adjusted by officers in exposed points of observation,

who must see to it, in case it is feasible to sweep beyond the first trenches, that the artillery screen does not work out as a check to their own troops. Everything is at the mercy of these observers, and a break in the telephone connection or a catastrophe wiping out an observation post would be followed by the immolation of their own troops.

The artillery encampments, being farther back from the front, take on the air of organized communities. In spots we found a system of hot and cold shower baths. The huts and dugouts had a semblance of village order, the fronts often decorated with crude bits of sculpture or drawing. Another detour, another climb, and we reached a group of 155-millimeter guns—enormous guns, ten feet high and from twenty-five to thirty feet from tip to tail, buried under branches of trees. On the next plateau a 75-millimeter gun had been mounted for defense against aeroplanes.

All through these districts narrow-gauge tracks ran everywhere for the transport of ammunition and water, which is scrupulously inspected. In this small group of huts we found numerous articles, tables, rockers, fashioned by the soldiers in their idle hours; a large cage, with half a dozen rare birds as pets, and on one side a curious arrangement of hanging bottles, which had been constructed into a musical instrument. The inventor, without a second urging, performed several complicated arias for our benefit.

We ended the afternoon with a visit to the aviation camp, a supply depot, and a first-line hospital. French surgery has accomplished marvels in this war, French medicine has succeeded in preventing the prophesied epidemics in the trenches; but on the side of hygiene and comfort there is much to be said in criticism. We went into one room with eight beds, tenanted by convales-

cents from major wounds so serious as not to have permitted their transfer to the rear. The room was alive with flies everywhere, clustered on the bedspreads, adhering to the bodies of the patients, whose only protections were fans with which they wearily strove to dispel the returning clouds. To American eyes, it was the worst thing we saw in a trip that had impressed us with the mechanical efficiency of the French organization in the front and the rear—and a few francs spent for mosquito netting would have remedied it all.

At the General Headquarters we had a dramatic encounter. On the night of the mobilization I had dined at the Players' Club with Hoffbauer, the painter. Two days later he had left for France as a volunteer. From time to time postal cards with meagre information had arrived. We knew that he was in the trenches, facing all the rigors of the Winter campaign. At Rheims

by accident we learned that he had been lately transferred through the influence of Flameng, the great French artist, to the headquarters of the army as one of the official painters of the war.

He was utterly unprepared for our arrival, struck dumb with the astonishment of perceiving these first friends in eleven months. We secured permission to carry him off with us for the night, at Château Thierry, where our party was an example of the simplicity and fraternity in the French Army—a simple soldier, two corporals, a Captain, and an officer of the General Staff. The dining room was filled with just such mixtures. If anything, the war has brought a more spontaneous democracy; only essentials count; pomp and trappings are too trivial to be noticed at such moments.

That night I sat up for long, eager questioning of Hoffbauer. He had been mobil-

ized in the reserves, and immediately volunteered for the active army. For days after the muster he had lived in railroad trains, little boxes, passing through villages with the shutters closed, absolutely ignorant of where he was going. He recalled the eagerness of those first days, the ardor of every one to get to the front; the short stops at each station; the women who came out to them to bring them provisions, to decorate them with flowers and place flags in their muskets. Then the sudden disembarkment; the beginning of the march to the front; the first sounds of firing in the air; the curious sobering effect as the cannonading increased in violence, and each said to himself:

"This is the beginning of death."

All at once, as they were approaching the front, a regiment passed, returning from the firing line, dirty, torn, bandaged, caked with grime—an awe-inspiring spectacle of actual war; a regiment of regulars that roared at

ENTRANCE TO UNDERGROUND DWELLINGS
AT ARTILLERY ENCAMPMENT.

THIRTY FEET UNDERNEATH THE GROUND. BUREAU OF OFFICERS.

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DAMAGE DONE CATHEDRAL OF ARRAS.

A VIEW OF THE CATHEDRAL UNDER BOMBARDMENT.

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

their holiday parade and joked "the little scholars" decked for a dance.

The tattered line passed. With one common impulse the volunteers stripped themselves of their flowers and their flags, silent under the rebuke. No one joked; a curious silence settled among them; every one thought of what had passed.

That evening they had gone forward to the front, the night hideous with the shriek of shells and the scream of the wounded. All at once an officer cried to them to lie flat on the ground. Then a shell burst scarcely fifteen feet away from them. Again a hurried order to advance, only this time six or seven men failed to rise.

"You were not afraid?" I said to him.

"At first, of course. Then you get a curious feeling of fatalism. Every one does."

The next day we returned to Paris. Of this trip I think the last and abiding impressions will always be of the women and the

children. Now, when in an occasional communiqué I read these short recurring words, "Yesterday a few shells fell on Rheims," I see before my eyes the women in the vineyards and the children in the shattered streets of Rheims, playing among the ruins.

ARRAS UNDER BOMBARDMENT

CHAPTER IV

ARRAS UNDER BOMBARDMENT

OUR second trip to the region of Arras, the scene of the bloodiest conflicts of the entire trench warfare, was in violent contrast to our first trip to Rheims. After the three days spent on this front, Rheims and Betheny seemed like regions under an armistice—entrenched camps, it is true, but living in a state of armed peace that had endured for generations and would continue so into the unfathomable future, but somehow removed from the horror and hideousness of actual war. At Rheims the destruction had been so complete that it had left an impression of a vast museum, in which our weak imagination refused to visualize the fury and havoc which had passed.

The stoic life of the city, the activities readjusted to meet a new conception of life, somehow intensified this sensation of permanence, of accepted conditions. At Arras, at Blangy, at the slopes of Notre Dame de Lorette and at the shattered town of Ablain St. Nazaire, we had an impression of living death, a sense of destruction haunting the ruins, the plowed hillsides, the very sky itself. Through the entire duration of our trip, the air was never quiet a moment, and at times the multiplicity of the explosions was staggering. When we arrived from Doullens, our headquarters, after a circuitous skirting of the least exposed routes, the atmospheric conditions themselves heightened this sense of desolation and terror. A high wind, rising at times to the fury of a gale, was sweeping through the littered streets, immense, storm-charged banks of clouds scurrying over the jagged house tops in grotesque, distorted, mammoth

shapes. For days Arras had been under continuous bombardment with the great German explosive shells. Of the 27,000 inhabitants, a bare 1,200 remained, hidden in cellar recesses, imprisoned for long periods, venturing timorously forth, with anxious, frightened glances at the threatening sky.

At our first stop, to pay our respects to the General in command and to receive our guide, we were brought into abrupt realization of the contrast between this visit and the last. The German spy system had done its work well. General X. had shifted his headquarters but a few days; yet already in the garden were great, gaping holes, in which our entire party could camp. Another shell, admirably aimed, had carried away a great portion of the first story and littered the salon with crumbling white masses of shattered blocks. The General and the staff themselves had sought the security of the cellars below, every opening

protected by heaped barricades of sandbags to catch the flying needles of steel. The rooms thus occupied, lighted by candles or lamps, with tiny vent holes for air where a coal chute descended, were damp, inexpressibly gloomy and oppressive. No prison, even in barbarous Mexico, could have surpassed the midnight, stifling depression of these dungeons, overrun by rats and vermin, typical of the homes of over a thousand human beings in Arras to-day. A group, indistinguishable in the obscurity, was poring over a map. At the entrance, behind the sandbags, four orderlies were playing cards. The General's apartment was considered a sort of throne room. It had a rug and two lithographs against the moist wall. It was about eight feet square, formerly the coal cellar. The officer who conducted us was delighted at our surprise, assuring us that if there were inconveniences, it was astonishing how quiet it was at night, except, of

course, when a shell tore through the upper stories. He admitted that the playfulness of the rats, particularly when they chased each other over the blanket, was rather disturbing, but one accustomed himself to even that.

In charge of Captain X. we started for a tour of the city to end with a visit to Blangy, where the French and German trenches were locked scarcely twenty meters apart. After this introduction to life under bombardment, with the repeated jarring explosions constantly about us, we experienced for the first time the true sensation of being under fire. Every street and every square had been searched by the German artillery—yesterday, last night, an hour before. There was a suspended stillness in the quarter about us that contrasted strangely with the uproar above us. The bombardment might be half a mile or five miles away, but I know each of us felt that

at any moment, at a caprice, the iron shower might come sweeping around to where it had swept before. Every crossing, every square, seemed to us horribly exposed. I still remember vividly the feeling of spreading desolation which I received as we crossed the Place Victor Hugo. Every window pane had been shattered, every wall riddled with great and small holes—but beyond these visible marks was the feeling of the flight of human beings, of the imminence of total destruction hanging over these deserted and mournful rows of silent homes. In the distance a woman's figure passed—a black, flitting shadow, the only human note. The destruction here had just begun, the more impressive for the fact. I remember the sight of one house, which had been torn completely away—the strange feeling of violation of privacy that it gave us to look in upon the tumbled bed and the remnants of a woman's dress scattered from the wardrobe. At an-

EFFECT OF ONE SHELL IN ARRAS.

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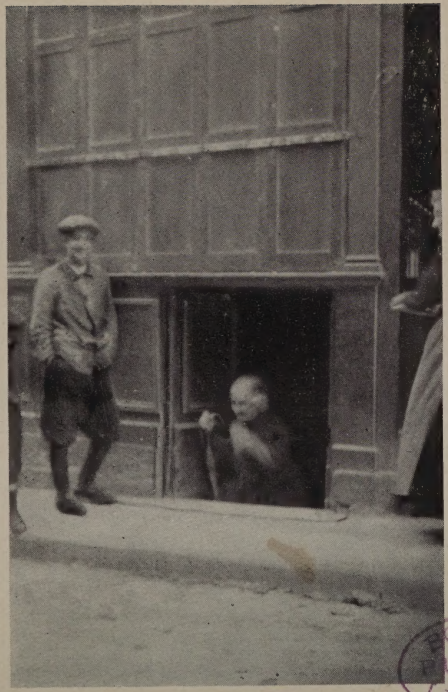
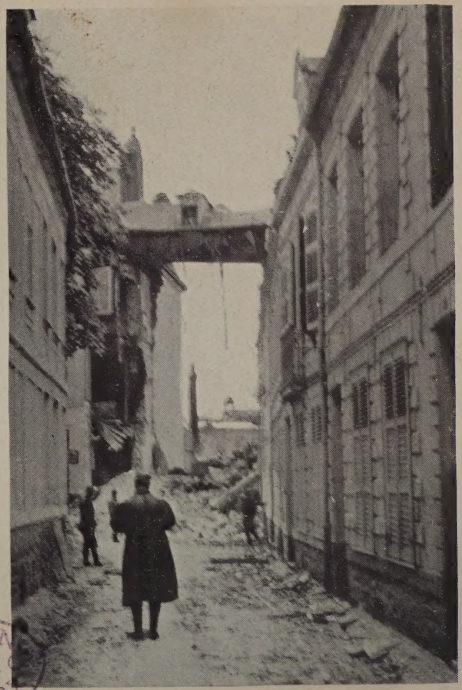


OLD WOMAN LIVING IN CELLAR WITHIN ONE HUNDRED YARDS OF BOMBARDED CATHEDRAL.



HOUSE DISEMBOWELLED BY ONE SHELL IN STREET OF ARRAS.
Postman was delivering letters here.

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other corner, a couple of houses were still smoldering, where incendiary bombs had set them on fire.

"They are very clever, les Boches," said Captain X. "They set fire to a house so that the flames will guide them, and when the firemen arrive, they bombard them with shrapnel."

The plaster was still dropping as we looked, and a gust of wind brought a sudden crumbling of bricks. We went on, through streets where stone and glass were rolling before us, the feeling of terror increasing with the silence lurking through this abandoned devastation—a gray, damp, stormy morning, with sudden, startling splashes of rain, a city conceived in the imagination of Edgar Allan Poe, where a sudden banging of shutters or the fall of a shattering glass seemed the doomed notes of the "Fall of the House of Usher." What a sense of haunting tragedy was conveyed by

these curtains streaming from abandoned windows! I remembered the time when I was a boy at Etretat. A murder had taken place in a chalet on a deserted allée, and we stood, in the fall of the night, gazing at the dread house, which seemed transformed to our imagination by an uncomprehended horror. I remember still through the passage of years a curtain streaming from the window, unheeded in the panic and the terror that reigned within. That is the impression that these torn, vacant houses, with bedraggled laces whipping from the windows, made on me. It seemed as though within each some unspeakable crime had taken place, from which the criminals had fled in nameless dread of the supernatural.

It did not seem possible that human beings could brave these haunted streets, and yet human beings were there. Occasionally, from the bowels of the street, through a clumsily erected pipe, a little puff of smoke

crept out, climbing stickily up the damp walls. In a broken street, where one shell had literally disemboweled a whole house, leaving only the roof hanging like a suspension bridge, whom should we happen upon but a postman delivering mail to a woman who rose cautiously from her cave! Remember, this was within fifty yards of the house which had been literally blown away. She was a sweet-faced old lady, untroubled and resigned. I asked the invariable question:

"How do you dare stay here?"

"Where would I go?" she said, with a helpless little look.

To her, as to the rest, to leave home meant the end of all things. The outer world was something uncomprehended, which terrified her. The military authorities have done everything possible to enforce the evacuation of Arras, short of an absolute order, and yet they are met at every turn with this ter-

rified clinging to the threshold, that prefers any risk rather than exile.

We reached the cathedral, which had been heavily bombarded during the night. Near by a group of houses were still burning from the last incendiary bombs. A few water pipes were playing upon the hot, smoky ruins. The building itself had been shattered and mutilated with a constant shower of shells, until it was now an uninhabitable ruin. However, even this does not satisfy —the Germans evidently intend to raze it to the ground, and each night return to the work of destruction. Within fifty feet a woman passed us, basket on her arm, stopping anxiously at a fresh explosion, to question an abbé who was contemplating the destruction at our sides:

"Monsieur L'Abbé, they are not for us, are they, those shells?"

"No, no; don't worry. It's farther on."

Reassured, she nodded brightly to us, as

though ashamed of her fear, and went resolutely up the street.

We climbed over the soft, white stones, heaped in refuse, with the damp, hot smells always in our nostrils, and left behind us the doomed cathedral. Halfway up the street I stopped to speak with a group still living in their cellar, within a hundred yards of this most exposed spot in Arras, heedless of destruction, and after much coaxing succeeded in getting the grandmother, a woman of 85, to appear at the cellar steps long enough to be photographed. They seemed to have slight fear, confident in the security of their retreat and firm in the belief that all that was sought was the destruction of the cathedral. A few doors above I accepted an invitation to visit one of these underground homes. The front cellar was given over to a grocery shop. A sealed room to one side, absolutely without light, held two enormous beds, in which father, mother, and

four children slept. I went back through a narrow passage to a room which served as kitchen, dining room, and parlor, equally without light. In one corner was a stove, opposite an altar with a statue of the Virgin, and two candles.

"Why, you're lodged like princes here," I said, laughing.

"Not bad, not bad at all."

"And business?"

"Oh, business—that's another thing! Still, when you think what's happened to the others, we can't complain."

I shook hands with them.

"Good luck to you throughout the war!"

"Merci bien, Monsieur."

Another turn, and we were before the abject ruins of what had been the pride of the city, the historic Hotel du Ville. Here, standing in the square, the intention of the Germans to concentrate on the destruction of this priceless monument alone was evi-

View of the Hotel de Ville.

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SOLDIERS IN DUGOUTS GIVING ADDRESSES IN ORDER TO RECEIVE PHOTOS.

CAPTURED GERMAN TRENCHES REORGANIZED BY ENGINEERS.

BOSTO
UBL
LIBRA

dent. Although the houses had been riddled with stray bits of shell and shrapnel, they stood in unbroken outline, a significant contrast to the shattered tower and crumbling dustheaps of the monument. A fine rain began, and we started to take shelter under the arcade to the right, to be greeted by a hasty warning from our guide.

"Not there, not there—too exposed. You're in the direct line."

With the constant shattering echo in the air, we needed no second reminder; we passed hurriedly on to the farther arcade, where the houses themselves interpose an effective barrier. There, to our astonishment, as we waited a moment for the shower to spend its force, from the arcade from which we had just been warned a scattering of children appeared out of the lower caves, and two pet dogs, romping in circles.

"So there are children there, where it is too dangerous for us," I said, laughing.

"Impossible to get them to move. They are convinced that it is all over—poor little devils."

We crossed the Grande Place, a vast open, cobbled space, where the grasses were greedily reclaiming their own, with groups of soldiers at every step, beside smoking kitchens, busy at their morning meal. Here, as everywhere, there was no attempt at ceremony, our officers seeming to avoid it. A few soldiers sprang to attention as we approached, but the rest, perceiving that our passage had no significance for them, continued in their lounging, reclining positions. We reached the outskirts of the city, with strong barricades multiplying at every corner, and, stretching our line into thinner groups, started for the exposed trenches at Blangy. After the precautions that were rigorously enforced upon us in our trip to Rheims, the long, open spaces, with the German lines plainly in view, through which we

passed gave us quite a different sensation as to the imminence of the conflict that continued to rage above our heads. Batteries were thundering at every point, shells, plainly visible, bursting a couple of miles away on the hostile slopes. We went on, seemingly into the very teeth of the fire, vibrantly conscious that this was something different from the "Tournée des Grandes Ducs," which we now mentally baptized our excursion to Rheims.

The boyau, or trench approach, was here of short extent; almost immediately we found ourselves in the underground encampment of a reserve line. To right and left, short paths led to dugouts in groups of two and three, barely wide enough to squeeze into, holding sometimes four men, in spaces about half that of a cabin on an ocean steamer. I remember how struck we were with the splendid morale of these troops, condemned to this disagreeable and irksome

inaction. They were invariably magnificent physical specimens, clear-eyed, and answering our jests with quick, delighted repartee. Each mudhole was still a home by the instinct of possession and habitation; each bore its whimsical name—"Villa l'Esperance," "Château des Princes," "Villa des Banquiers. Ring twice. The concierge lives under the stairs." In the next cluster I noted rough plank crossings, entitled "Pont des Soupirs," and a direct allée to the front baptized "Tranché de la Gloire."

Reserve trenches and barricades, with emplacements for machine guns sweeping the defenses themselves, met us now at every turn. We kept on, with the jagged roofs of Blangy to our left, till the trench suddenly left the open field, with occasional gay splashes of flowers and rolling, storm-driven clouds above, to plunge through brick walls and cellars, with abrupt views overhead of obscure kitchens and devastated dining

rooms, as we continued to wind underneath the huddled habitations, with utter disregard for masonry obstructions.

To get a clear conception of this fantastic maze of threading trenches underneath the village of Blangy, imagine a New York block the upper stories of which have been blown away and scattered by concentrated shell fire for weeks until not a vestige of architectural order remains above the shattered first stories. Imagine that this entire block could be lifted, as a crowbar removes a giant rock. Underneath, a tangled mass of multiplied, intersecting trenches would appear, alive with human beings, just as the lifted rock would reveal a myriad tangled worm tracks. Only at Blangy these worm tracks, instead of reaching below the foundations, run through them. Impossible to describe this grotesque, distorted idea of familiar things—delving into damp recesses, twisting through solid foundations, emerg-

ing into bleak cellar passages choked with waiting soldiers—a group of twenty here, a dozen beyond in the adjoining cellar, stretched in the scattered straw, conversing in whispers.

All at once we stopped for a consultation. Though there was evidently some division of opinion as to the danger involved, Captain X. whispered:

"We're going up for a close view of the German trenches. Only, no talking; they're close enough as it is."

We went up broken, dusty stairs, past the second floor, into the garret at the top, cautioned to keep back from the vacant window. The sloping roof was absolutely devoid of shingles—a naked skeleton of thin, gaping slats through which we peered cautiously. Across the ruin of nearby outhouses and storm-swept courtyard, the French and German trenches lay nakedly visible to us, even to the barbed wire en-

tanglements, scarcely fifty meters away. For a mile or more, from where they took a sudden turn and passed into the distance, closely locked in murderous embrace, we could follow the course of these open scars on the green surface of the earth. A few trees nearby had had their foliage literally scorched away, and these ragged, singed branches, with occasional tufts still showing, gave us a quick visualization of the storm of shot and shell that had passed. Walter Hale took here one of the most remarkable photographs of the war—a picture taken cautiously through the slats, one of which still shows in the lower portion. It was only after we had filed noiselessly down, and found a fretting, fuming group of officers below, that we realized the danger passed. The slightest perception of our presence above (and with the ceaseless, sweeping search of the German glasses, it was a wonder how our party escaped their

observation), and a single shell would have gutted the house and wiped our entire party out of existence.

Still determined to approach even nearer, we kept on, winding through a malt factory, turning to look back at the great fissures rent in the torn brick walls by the German high-explosive shells, twisting through the most desolate heap of refuse I have ever witnessed —yet a refuse so precious that human beings had stabbed, cut, grappled, and choked each other to death in their mad lust for its possession. We were now scarcely forty meters away from the German trenches. Bullets from rival sharpshooters were whining above us like swarming insects. Three of us climbed into the second story of a broken house. The circular stairs were hanging by threads; the flooring was so shredded that it could not have held another human body. From where we were, peering through chinks and sudden cracks, we could have

thrown a stone into the opposite ditches—and still not a sight of a human enemy! The position was too precarious and too open even for the gray, rainy day which had made the feat possible. Our sensations were quickly satisfied. We came down gingerly.

Still we advanced until we reached the point where the German lines were but twenty meters away. The same impression returned to me, looking from this last-flung outpost of observation—refuse, crowned with barricades of barbed wire—ground that seemed humanly impassable—jagged, uprooted, torn, deformed, desecrated—the world in refuse! And for a hundred yards of this worthless dump heap of man and nature a thousand lives must be paid!

We left here with the feeling of having been in the heart of a cyclone, as though everything—solid walls, tree trunks, ledges of rock, green fields, and human bodies—had

been caught by some gigantic hands and torn into unrecognizable shreds. And from this overwhelming impression of destruction we continued along the front line, greeted by silent, erect human beings, unfaltering and unafraid. Surely, no matter what hideous catastrophes man's destructive mind may invent, the atom of life in him remains unconquerable and superior.

The rest of the party had passed on, leaving me behind with Captain X. of the regiment on guard.

"If you want a sensation," he said, "come here."

He signaled to me, and we entered what at first appeared to me to be the ordinary bombproof shelter. Once in, however, and my eyes growing accustomed to the darkness, I perceived a square canvas covering against the wall at one side.

"A tunnel?"

He nodded.

"A gallery running under the German lines, eighty to a hundred meters."

"Can we go under?"

He nodded again, gave an order, and the orderly who was with us lit a candle. We went on, crouching, at times almost bent double, for forty, fifty meters, past a great pipe which later would serve to pump air into the depths. I remember still the sensation when the gray opening dwindled and disappeared and it seemed as though the earth had closed behind us. It was all very damp, mysterious, and increasingly uncomfortable. The gallery turned off to one side to a supplementary poste d'écoute.

"We keep a man down there from time to time to listen. If the Bosches attempt to dig a mine, we can locate the direction by the sound of the picks, and then, at the right time, 'bon soir, les Bosches.' Any further?"

"A little," I answered, though I admit

now that my only thought was to go as far as I could and to get back as quickly. The thought had somehow possessed my imagination that these same Bosches might have driven their gallery the first, and take it into their heads at any moment to treat us to a sudden ascension. I expressed as much to my guide, speaking in a whisper.

"It's the feeling they all get down here. Even the regular engineers want to stop too soon. For that reason most mines explode short. Don't blame them."

We went on now in absolute silence until we had covered about eighty meters, which should have brought us within about fifteen yards under the German trenches. At a gesture from my guide, I placed my ear to the cold, sticky wall. The noises from above, though confused, were plainly distinguishable. Any definite sound, such as the fall of a pick, would have been instantly

detected. My curiosity by this time was abundantly satisfied. We returned quietly and quickly. It had been rather a creepy experience. I was decidedly glad to get back to the open air.

The party had by this time gone considerably away from us, seeking the ruins of a château. In our haste to catch up with them, we had a new test of the vigilance of the German outposts. The trenches here wound back and forth in such confusion that a stranger could quickly lose himself in the maze. We followed, always underground, the trench that led into an abandoned mill organized as a block house, where a score of soldiers were stationed; several, halfway up the wall, firing at the slightest disturbance opposite—a shadow against the banked dirt, an unaccustomed rustling of the grasses in the rear, where a well-directed shot might find three inches of exposed head. We had gone off our track and were directed

to the boyau, which ran back of the house. Believing that we were still in the shelter of the walls, we started across the yard to make a short cut, instead of returning by way of the boyau in which we had come. Ten feet—and two bullets flattened themselves in the bricks above our heads. No wild loon ever disappeared beneath the surface of the water as quickly as I dove down, caught a supporting beam and swung into the protection of the trench. My companion, who had ducked back into the shelter of the block house, arrived breathlessly a moment later, by the boyau, with anxious inquiry, the more concerned that his lack of precaution had exposed a visitor. However, no harm being done, we paid the enemy a laughing tribute mixed with a little derision:

"Well, well, they keep good watch, but they shoot badly."

He was still plainly concerned at the ad-

venture, so I reassured him, telling him we would say nothing of it.

Our way now lay backward. We passed from the first trenches into the second, and all at once, beyond them, came upon a hospital of the first line. Here, to my surprise, I found next to the house where the Red Cross flag was flying an immense cavern, freshly dug, soldiers at work still enlarging it, the Red Cross flag proving rather an attraction for German shells than a protection. The wounded from the front had to be stored temporarily twenty feet underground. Leaving the trenches now behind, we entered again the outskirts of the city, deserted and disheveled streets covered with steel fragments of shrapnel and shell, pausing a moment to enjoy a hearty laughter at a dilapidated shelter, now installed with showers, bearing the grandiloquent title of "Station Thermale de Blangy les Bains."

The first visit was ended. We stopped

for the last handshakes—impulsive, loyal handshakes—looking into the quiet eyes of these splendid men who had been a moment in our lives,—wondering.

"Good-bye. Good luck for the war."

"Esperons et bien merci."

NOTRE DAME DE LORETTE RECONQUERED

CHAPTER V

NOTRE DAME DE LORETTE RECONQUERED

THE next day, with gray clouds and a fine rain falling intermittently, we were off early, for a trip over the Notre Dame de Lorette slopes, the scene of the closest and bloodiest fighting of this whole war, every yard of which would rank with the Bloody Angle of Spottsylvania. Convoys were passing everywhere, long, herded cavalcades of horses out for exercise crowding to the side of the road to let us pass; a dozen artillery caissons carrying the day's ammunition to the batteries; a quarter of a mile of creeping prairie wagons, laden with bread; immense hay wagons; and then, in a sudden cloud of mud, a score of green auto busses, inclosed and covered with straw as a

protection against the heat, running at thirty miles an hour, bringing fresh meat from further depots. At every turn our horns were screeching their warning to battalions and companies of territorials moving out for their service of construction and policing of the roads. Halfway to the front, we came to an enforced stop, crowding against the sidewalk. A sound of bugles leaping on the morning air—and up the long, gray street, the head of a regiment appeared, returning from the front. They passed grimly and methodically, with surging rhythm—a grimy, tattered, scarred mass, with a sprinkle of white bandages, a dozen soldiers still in their ranks, still shouldering their muskets, limping on with the aid of canes. The regimental band passed, the buglers twirling their brass trumpets in a shining, flurried salute; a young officer on horseback, gravely acknowledging our salutes; massed, blue-gray companies, with

Aspect of Notre Dame de Lorette slopes.

Part of battlefield of Notre Dame de Lorette,
showing effect of artillery fire.

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EFFECT OF THE EXPLOSION OF A FRENCH MINE.

EFFECT OF FRENCH ARTILLERY FIRE IN TRENCHES.

LIBRARY

rhythmic beat in insect unison; artillery trains, with gatling guns under soiled coverings; a group of Red Cross wagons, with wounded staring out at us; smoking kitchens on wheels, piled thick with fuel and provender, and behind, the last train of commissariat wagons, with bread, wine, and meat. One battalion passed, and then another—all business-like and mechanical, quite different from the regiment on parade down long avenues of acclaiming crowds and fluttering banners.

The cars sprang ahead in the interval between one division and another already stretching along a side road—interminable convoys, waiting patiently at each intersection. I thought of the band that had led the way, with the one touch of martial pomp, and perhaps a little contemptuously asked:

"What do they do in battle?"

"The band? Stretcher bearers, of course. When there is a charge they go forward with

the rest, to bring the wounded back at night —under fire. Oh, it's not all music for them."

This, I confess, was a new point of view to me.

On the way Captain X. held forth on a number of things. In this war young troops have, it seems, one serious fault—they are too eager to advance; consequently it is necessary to mix them in with seasoned veterans who can teach them to restrain their arrogant courage and instill the necessary qualities of precaution and patience. He was loud in his praise of the French artillery and the scientific efficiency with which they attack their tasks. The taking of the village of Neuville St. Vaaste was particularly interesting. The artillery began by demolishing the farther houses, gradually creeping up to the front lines, so that when the first trench was carried there could be no falling back of the enemy from one line to an-

other. Moreover, they had learned that the Germans had constructed a subterranean passage for the quick dispatch of reinforcements, and this tunnel they had located within a limit of fifty yards. Before the opening of the final vigorous charge the heavy French guns planted five shells in a line across this space, tearing immense caverns across the tunnel and completely nullifying this access.

We swept on through villages with long lines of Red Cross automobiles, through villages where the soldiers were shaving in the open air or bathing in the basins, past fields with occasional artillery depots, with thousands of busses stacked in shelters, with ammunition wagons arriving for increased supplies. The Captain, with his officers' map spread before him, traced the progress of the last two months. Seen thus on a map, trench warfare is capable also of strategy and tactics. When a position is too strong

for a costly attack, weak spots are found somewhere up and down the line, gradually saps are pushed forward, fragments of trenches are carried, until, after weeks, a pocket of iron and steel is laboriously formed, holding a rich prize. Then at the right moment, in the midst of a general attack, the pocket is closed and 2,000 or 3,000 prisoners are caught in the trap, and the line has gone forward 500 yards, in a new, straightened-out front. All the art of this trench warfare consists in the selecting of the right spots for these pockets; and, with the French at least, each conquered fragment of trenches thrust forward has some such flanking intention.

For several miles we had left behind this network of villages, literally choked with reserve troops, and had been running along deserted highways, with the growing staccato note of cannon swelling from the horizon. We stopped all at once by a clustered group

of houses on the back of an open plateau. The next run was in full view of the German batteries, a mile of clear space. Captain X. descended to give his orders. The automobiles, of which there were three, were to go at intervals of five minutes. We led the way, throttle open, fairly roaring over the ground, quickly gaining the sheltering foliage of the Bois de Bouvigny, passing old trenches now miles from the front, which marked the progress of the French advance, coming to a stop in the heart of a Spahi encampment dug in through the serried tree trunks, for all the world like a prairie dog village. Here another guide was awaiting us. Lieutenant X., a bright, energetic, smiling young fellow (I learned afterward that he had had two brothers killed), who greeted us with a bit of news. The night before there had been a charge, and the French had taken a line of trenches at Zed. As this was the continuation of a pocketing manœu-

vre which Captain X. had been explaining to me, the information excited us greatly. A couple of prisoners had just come in and were under guard in the opposite stable. The rest of the party now joining us, we went in for a look at the prisoners. They were in sharp contrast—one, an under officer of the hospital service, a man of good physique and quiet force; the other a soldier, of rather brutish stupidity and unimpressive physically. Both were plainly dazed and exhausted from their experience with hand grenades and their escape from cold steel. The bayonet, by the way, is by far the most deadly method of attack. In all the hospitals I visited—and I saw thousands of wounded—I do not remember more than three cases of bayonet wounds. When the cold steel enters the body, it enters to kill. The French we found in their treatment of German prisoners courteous, tolerant, and devoid of animosity. From what I was able

to learn in personal conversation, the attitude of both the English and the French, however, toward the Germans in the fury of the battle itself has become one of bitterest hatred—a change that has been wrought since the introduction of the attack by poisonous gases. The memory of the inhuman sufferings thus inflicted has completely changed the attitude of the belligerents.

We started for a preliminary inspection of the woods of Bouvigny, passing along one of the narrow gauge railroads that thread through this ravaged wilderness. At every step we were stopped to examine enormous cavities made by shells freshly fallen. The woods were filled with French batteries in action, so carefully concealed that though our ears were deafened by the recurring explosions—this day we must have passed among 200 guns—we were unable to detect a single one. We passed great depots of water, from which barrels were sent forward

by the winding track. For the French, in their admirable preventive measures, exercise the strictest control over the water supply. We visited a dozen bomb-proof shelters sunk under enormous piles of sandbags, and examined the stack of hand grenades, some in shape of balls, others stored in bottles or attached to lances.

We stopped at the last headquarters, where we visited the telephone central, which connects with every battery. I was talking to the operator, who had come up from the barricaded ground, when the telephone rang and I heard him conversing with an officer in a front battery, sending in a report of the opening cannonade. For acres here everything was underground, continually under bombardment, the surface riddled with gaping mud chasms. One hole, I remember, from a 210, was 30 feet across and 15 feet deep. Four days before, we were told, a group had been dining in the open when a

THE RAILROAD THROUGH THE WOODS TO CARRY WATER AND AMMUNITION.

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CAPTAIN X. TELLING STORY OF THE TAKING OF FIRST GERMAN TRENCH.
Men below him took part in charge.

CAPTAIN X.'S MEN.

shell had fallen directly in their midst. The entire party had been wiped out. For the next few days they picked hands and feet from the surrounding trees. Seeing the devastation about us, we could well believe such tales.

Before even we had left the thick woods we took to the boyaux. The sound of the batteries of 75s firing around us was deafening. Also, at this moment we had not learned to distinguish the sound of the departing shell from the explosion of the arriving one; consequently it seemed to us that we were in a perfect hail of projectiles and that at any moment the ground about us would heave up and uprooted trees come crashing on our heads. Lieutenant X. drew my attention to the iron wounds in the trunks about us:

"Notice how everything is about three feet above the ground. I have saved myself twenty times by flinging myself flat on the

ground. A shell, even the biggest, can burst fifteen yards away and pass over you, if you do that."

I religiously stored away the advice.

The boyau left the last protecting branches and struck into the open plateau of Notre Dame de Lorette. From where we were we could see the hills, like three giant tidal waves, rolling out into the flat sweep of low plains. The panorama was unincumbered. The green stretch extended for miles in all directions—below us the twisting parallel of trenches and a dozen villages, some in shadow, some resplendent in rare shafts of sunlight. The boyau here was of extraordinary depth and solidity, sometimes ten feet in height. At each side, clustered telephone wires ran down to batteries. We passed a group of telephone repairers laying wires, inspecting others. The bombardment had increased. Slowly we were beginning to distinguish between friendly

and threatening sounds. The smells began to be offensive, and we noticed for the first time ugly swarms of flies. Above the boyau, as the littered hill rolled up, we had our first glimpse of this vast cemetery—a scattering of thin wooden crosses, marking the end of friend and foe; a soldier's cap, tattered, moldy from exposure, distinguishing the French, where some comrade during the night had crawled, at the risk of his life, to add a human note to the memory of a friend.

These long, sunken corridors opened into caves of all descriptions—for the first aid to the injured, for the reserves, for shelters in case of bombardment.

We turned from these highways into trenches little used and consequently roughly organized, leading over the most exposed region, on the very back of the slopes themselves, which are absolutely devoid of tree or bush—a glaring mark for miles of German batteries lining the horizon. The

trenches seemed very shallow, after the security we had left. At places the sand bags hardly reached to our shoulders. All around us the spectacle of the ground was frightful—not a blade of grass, not a note of green, in the white and yellow sea of mud, plowed and replowed by the drenching shower of shell. The crosses, bare or supporting blue caps, sprouted in thicker profusion. Flies rose up and swarmed about our faces as the stench became more noticeable. The whole plateau seemed abandoned, when all at once we turned to the right and came full into long trenches of Spahis, peering out at us from little scooped-in shelters in the very walls we brushed.

From this high point of vantage we looked out cautiously over the wide field of the bombardment. German shells were bursting down at our right, throwing up thick, brownish clouds of smoke. Far across the plain, to the left and right,

French shells were wreaking havoc among the German trenches, rolling up in rapid white clouds, for all the world like the sudden released steam of a giant siren. We were in the direct line of fire, French batteries, perhaps a mile back of us, firing in series of three and four, the sky above us hideous with the noise of their flight, each flight marked by a sound so prolonged that we strained our eyes upward that we might be able to detect the passage which was so distinct to our ears.

The sounds of an artillery bombardment are curiously distinct and soon recognizable. A battery firing over your head deafens the ear like the rending, wrenching crash of forked lightning. A shell exploding on contact has a muffled, dulled concussion, similar to ordinary blasting, while the arriving ones, except those of extreme velocity, give warning by a whining approach, like the whirr of a giant top. The

cry of the shell in its first departure, traveling through the air—the most impressive note of all—sounds as though a thin sheet of tin were being torn in pieces.

We crossed the Colonel of a regiment returning from a tour of inspection. He seemed rather surprised to see us in this comparatively unprotected region, as no civilians had been taken over this stretch before. Captain X. and the Colonel held a consultation. Luckily for us the day was still windy and overcast, and, as the weather conditions had prevented the Germans from sending up their habitual captive balloon, we received permission to proceed, with many cautions.

"You are in luck," said Lieutenant X. "We can go as far as the Chapel of Notre Dame de Lorette itself. You will see a nice sight there. From now on we pass through captured German territory."

We stopped at the first German line captured in that great onward sweep which

made the French masters of the plateau. As luck would have it, Captain X. and a detachment of the Nth Regiment, heroes of that very first assault, were quartered in the next trench. He stood up on the battered wall to point out to us the exact locality of the charge, recounting the graphic details, while his men listened below, nodding in approval.*

"It was on the 9th of March, at 4 o'clock in the morning. We had been standing in ice and water for months. There will never be anything like that again. Only those who have been through it can understand. Twenty-five of us, the best soldiers in the army, too, had their feet frozen that night —amputated. Well, we got tired of cooling our limbs in iceboxes—anything to keep the blood in circulation. When we got the order to charge we sprang at it with a will, I

* While correcting the proof of this book the author received news of the death of Captain X. at Fouchez, in the last great French offensive.

can tell you. You see the German trench over there—sixty, seventy meters? You see what the ground is like now? Imagine it on the 9th of March, at 4 o'clock in the morning, with the snow and the ice and the pools of water and the holes of the marmites. That's what we went over. When the Bosches saw us coming they were so surprised they thought we were coming over to get warm.

" 'Are you surrendering?' they called to us.

" 'Find out for yourselves,' we cried.

"They found out. When we were in among them they surrendered quick enough, all right. A lot of them were down in their bomb-proof holes, too cold and stiff to get out quickly. We got them like rats. It's a dirty bit of ground now, but you should have seen it then!"

What he said was repeated to us often. In this trench warfare the last charge is

rarely made at a distance of more than fifty yards. It's all over in ten seconds, and the very depth and completeness of the German shelter often leaves them prisoners before they can struggle to the surface to meet the sudden onrush.

We wound along over the Grande Eperon, the Eperon des Spahis, toward the Blanche Voie, the third and last of the ridges, to our destination, the Chapel of the Notre Dame de Lorette. We crossed second, third, and fourth lines, taken by the bayonet from the Germans. Here the region was so exposed and the massacre had been so complete that even if the time had been there it had been too dangerous to bury the dead in the open field. Some corpses had been thrown over the side of the trench, at a spade's distance. Most of them had been thrown into the wall itself, roughly covered over, and sprinkled with quicklime. The bare crosses outside grew up like weeds.

The stench was nauseating. At every step now a uniform showed through the wall, spattered with quicklime—an arm or a leg. I remember a waxy knee sticking out (R. said it was the color of an apricot) over which the flies had settled in a black, swarming screen. The spectacle of death was so haunting, so near and so vast that it seemed as though we were passing among the living dead, mutilated and deformed beyond recognition, but yet with some whispered echo of life still fluttering in them. What a passage it must have been at night, lighted only by faint rays of the moon or muffled lanterns! But I suppose, as the human mind has accustomed itself to all things, that even the soldiers who creep along these haunted paths to the front in the obliterating night pay little attention to these reminders of their personal danger.

In the midst of this charnel field we heard a sudden oath:

"Nom de Dieu! What's the matter with them? They'll be firing into our lines next! A hundred yards short, and fifty to the left. Tell them that."

We turned a corner and came upon an officer with field glasses, directing the fire of some battery we had left miles behind. Beyond the plain a white cloud was rolling lazily away. At his side, a Corporal, with telephone strapped to his head, was repeating:

"What's the matter with you? You're short, short; a hundred meters short, and fifty to the left."

We waited a moment, hearing the tearing, tinny screech of a shell traveling above us. Then a breathless moment, and before us, in the distance, an upthrown mass of dirt and stone showed how absolutely the correction had been made. The officer grumbled:

"That's better, much better. That's something like it. Tell them to hold that."

"Good; very good. Hold that," repeated the operator.

He did not turn at our approach, or offer a greeting. His business was too important for such details.

Despite an inclination to tarry, we went on for the last stretch toward the chapel.

"Just as well," said Lieutenant X. to me. "An observation post like that is just what the Bosches are looking for."

At one point the meagre trenches broke completely, flattened out for thirty yards. Lieutenant X., crouching down, ran hastily ahead to find the way, and presently waved us on. It was not a passage to our liking, and we were forced to take it at intervals. Somehow the realization of what a shell might mean had come over our imaginations through these hideous fields. We went on, through trenches with some semblance of order, though not much, still among the projecting corpses, brushing our way through

the flies that rose heavily from the dead at the intrusion of the living—clouds and clouds of flies, sticky, lazy black flies, unlike any that I had ever seen before. Ahead of me Lieutenant X., pointing to shoes that in spots projected from the mud, said:

"That's French. That fellow's a Bosche —and that one, too. I can tell by the shoes —they're different. A bit more now, and we are at the chapel."

We covered another space of shallow, foul trenches—irregular, broken, whipped back and forth by the German fire, and came to a halt.

"There it is."

"Where?"

"There."

"What?"

"The chapel."

"The Chapel of Notre Dame de Lorette?"

"There is the Chapel of Notre Dame de Lorette."

He reached out, and in the muddy swirl of overturned earth struck a cluster of broken bricks. That was the Chapel of Notre Dame de Lorette—bricks and mud confounded, churned into an ugly, unrecognizable mass! Not one stone remained upon another. It was as though the earth had opened and sucked the chapel down and closed, boiling and seething, over it again. We stood here a long moment looking back at the three billowing slopes rolling behind us like three tidal waves, at the most hideous and desolate spectacle I ever expect to witness. It could not be called earth—it was something unrecognizable and monstrous—an earth that had gone mad and become a sea—a sea of mud and stones, a yellow, nasty, boiling sea, with churning, leaping swirls. The whole was so foul and so hideous that it seemed as though we had reached a place so accursed on the earth's surface that we were standing among the excre-

ments of nature itself. That human beings had lived, fought, advanced, and retreated over this distortion was absolutely incomprehensible, except for the haunting reminder of the tiny pointed crosses stark against the leaden sky, the stench of the trenches and the buzzing, lazy, sticky flies. When the Day of the Last Judgment comes, and the earth yawns and gives up its dead, it must look something like this. We said little to each other as we stood there, each searching among his own thoughts.

"We had better get back to the other trenches," said Lieutenant X., with an estimating glance at the spot where we stood. "It's a miracle they haven't seen us."

We followed willingly. An occasional rifle shot went stinging above us, probably aimed at the observation post up the hill. We left the abandoned trenches we had been following—abandoned as though the pollution and desecration through which they

had passed were too terrible even for modern warfare. A group of soldiers crossed us, going forward to relieve their comrades. At our sides a soldier's head peered out at us from a blanketed recess in the wall—blanketed to keep off the flies. These hasty resting places, where they passed the day in long slumber (for night is the time of activity and watchfulness), were mere pockets in the mud—all very well in summer, but what must they be in periods of driving storm and icy cold! Corpses were still about us everywhere, announced by the stenches and carrion flies, sticky as wet blotting paper. I can remember still the repulsion, the physical shudder that went through me when they landed clumsily on my hand. And even in the midst of this, as we looked, the sun came shining out, and over the plains, so quiet and calm, half a dozen villagers came smiling forth, unterrified and oblivious of this carnage in the air!

The sounds of bombardment had lessened on each side. The groups of soldiers we passed in their shelters were busy with bread and sausages.

"We'll have a bit of calm now," said Lieutenant X. "Each usually respects the lunch hour."

Lieutenant X. and I were ahead, our party cautiously strung out for about a quarter of a mile. We had just greeted a couple of sentinels at the opening of a bomb-proof shelter, and started down a long, straight stretch of trench directly in the line of the German batteries, when, without the slightest warning, something horribly close and sudden went whining past our heads. The next moment, thirty yards ahead, and about fifteen at the side of the trench, a mass of earth and rock rose violently into the air. It was as intimate an acquaintance with a German shell as I have any desire to experience. We scrambled back, crouching down against

the side of the boyau at each succeeding screech, and gained the protection of the bomb-proof shelter, where the soldiers and several of our party had already disappeared. Lieutenant X. went back to reassure the rest of the party, who had been frightened out of their wits, believing that we had been caught. As the bombardment might continue for any length of time, we decided to go on. And a very uncomfortable passage it was, with shells bursting up and down the hill, one in particular coming as close to our party at the rear as the first had come to us. However, our discomfiture furnished the greatest amusement to the sentinels, who watched our going from the mouth of the bomb-proof shelter, slapping their knees in delight and crying:

"Aha!—the civilians; they're getting a taste of it now! Look at them scamper!"

We went along as fast as we could, without much thought of dignity, dropping

down at each warning approach, gradually and gratefully hearing the shells falling farther and farther behind. Explosions on the hillside were plainly visible, the most impressive being a few shrapnel shells which burst a hundred feet in the air above us, but fortunately badly aimed.

Once back in the deeper boyaux, we waited for the party to assemble and to assure ourselves that no harm had been done. I remember the feeling of delicious satisfaction that came to us as we continued through the back trenches, so deep, so clean-cut, and so disciplined, as though, after the waste and filth through which we had passed, this were civilization itself.

We left the boyaux and returned by the wood. A few batteries were firing intermittently, and in the riddled trees the strangest of all notes—the notes of birds singing, as though nature, too, could readjust itself to any condition.

We lunched at regimental headquarters, a most delicious lunch, heightened, perhaps, by the comfortable feeling of what we had left behind us. And yet, as I remember it now, our repast consisted of hard-boiled eggs, sliced ham and beef, a jar of pâté de foie gras, and a dish of apricots. We lunched merrily, with spirits that seemed suddenly released, as though by common consent making no allusion to the impressions of the morning. Only, I remember, when the apricots were passed, R. shook his head and turned away, and I knew of what he was thinking.

A VILLAGE IN SHREDS

CHAPTER VI

A VILLAGE IN SHREDS

LUNCH over, we were shown a great hole blown through the opposite room three days before, to dispel any impression of security which we might have formed. Our next destination was the village of Ablain St. Nazaire, conquered from the Germans a month before, a village that extended at the foot of the three ridges which we had visited in the morning. A quick passage through the woods, with soldiers burrowed like rabbits and gophers at every step, a re-awakened havoc in the air from batteries hidden at perhaps fifty paces from us, and we gained the boyaux which, after a brief moment, brought us to the sheltered region of the Eperon des Arabes. Spahis in olive uniforms were encamped in long

lines just under the crest. Shallow dugouts had been scooped into the soft white earth, some protected by crude thatching, most of them nothing more than pockets in the earth. In each hole from two to three human beings were stretched in insensible fatigue, though at every moment the air was shattered with the tremendous explosions of batteries not two hundred yards away. This was perhaps the crudest form of life we had seen, the nearest return to the caveman existence.

Here we found, in a dugout purposely thrust to a more protecting depth, the pet of the regiment, a little fox terrier bitch, with three puppies which she had borne and reared under fire, quite untroubled by the constant uproar. The officers, Frenchmen in every instance, lived with the soldiers, their quarters a little better, rough wood cabins reinforced with saplings. They, too, complained of the rats.

THE ROAD THROUGH MONT ST. ELOI.

From the drawing by Walter Hale.

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We continued along the ridge, with occasional guarded ascents to points of observation, from which Hale was able to take remarkable photographs of the panorama of the battle, with the French shells bursting at a dozen points in the distance. At every moment the cannonading increased in intensity, evidently protecting the captured trench at Zed or preparing the way for a night advance. From this point of vantage we could look back over the wooded slopes, where the French batteries must be concealed. I suppose at this time fully one hundred and fifty guns were in action within our radius, yet, despite the utmost vigilance, I was able to detect only one emplacement, and that in a fringe of woods directly opposite, aided by the marks of the searching fire which had left a hundred ugly holes in the meadow between us.

We wound down the ridge to the plain below. At one encampment—for dugouts

lined the sides as we descended—Ponsot, of the Foreign Department, carried off a work of art by a local genius—a bust of William Pasha, cleverly hewn of soft, white stone, caricaturing the Emperor in a Turkish fez. In the bomb-proof shelter at the foot a soldier, perceiving that we were Americans, introduced himself, asking us to transmit news of him to New York. It was the chauffeur of William Salomon, the banker, a personal friend of mine. He was in the best of spirits, confident as every one with whom we conversed in this region, sure of the individual superiority of the French soldiers, admitting grudgingly the strength of the German artillery, but certain that that, too, would shortly be counteracted.

"If it were not for their guns, we would walk through them like paper."

From the shelter back of the ridge, we looked out at a broad expanse of field. The highway ran from the foot of the slope where

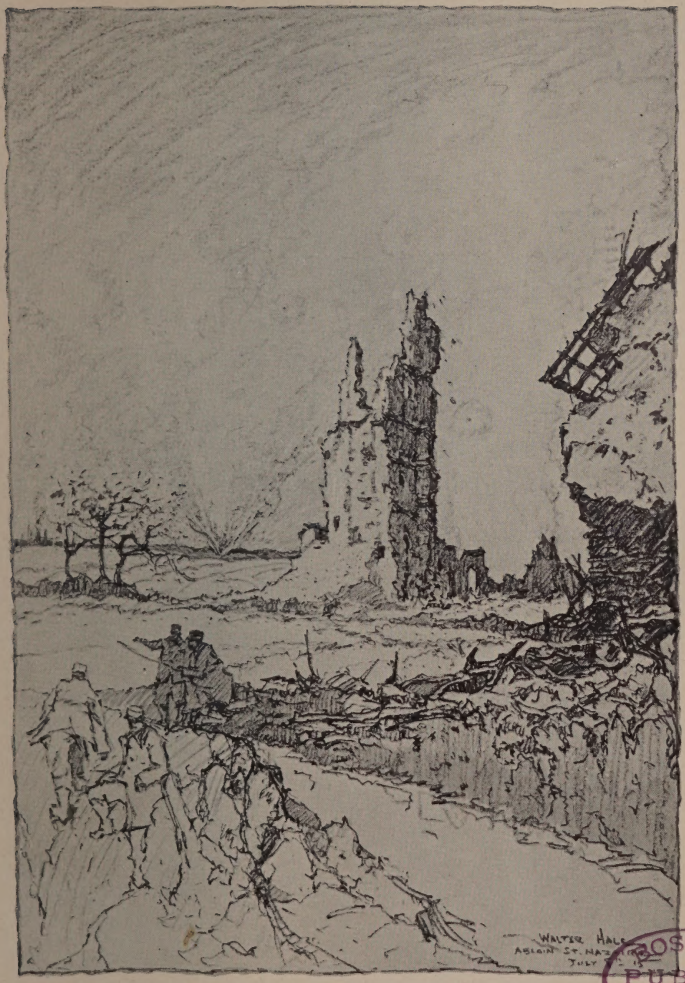
we stood a quarter of a mile straight out, and turned for an ascent of half a mile. Our automobiles were parked at the top, with orders for one, the largest, to come down later and get us. This arrangement gave place to an excited discussion. It seemed that the region was under such direct exposure to the German batteries that it had been deemed unsafe and forbidden for general passage. Even that morning, two Red Cross men with a stretcher on wheels, who had taken the road, had been bombarded for over half an hour. However, it was too late to transmit new orders, and we would have to await results. They came, fast enough, and furnished an extraordinary spectacle to those who remained behind.

Three of us accepted the invitation to enter the village of Ablain St. Nazaire with Captain X, the Major of the Spahis and two subordinate officers. As we started, a French soldier arrived from the front with a

German prisoner in charge. He was a young boy, scarcely 20, from the north-eastern provinces, evidently quite uncertain as to whether his destination was a prison or a soup kettle. Physically he was a wreck—thin, wasted away, evidently a consumptive. Officers and soldiers crowded about him during his examination by Captain X, exclaiming:

"Poor devil! Think of them using men like that! He isn't fit to carry a soup pail!"

If he were a significant element of the German forces—and the officers assured me that almost 15 per cent. of the late prisoners were just such weaklings—certainly the Germans have been forced to draw on elements of the population which no French regiment would accept. Gradually his terror seemed to disappear under the unexpected friendliness of his reception. He had been found in a captured trench, stunned



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THE RUINED CHURCH AT ABLAIN ST. NAZAIRE.

From the drawing by Walter Hale.

Beyond the firing seen on the left, is the sugar mill at Souchez.

by the havoc of the hand grenades. For months he had been at the front, seeing absolutely nothing. Unfortunately, I was unable to converse with him and put the questions to him I wanted. What an extraordinary, revealing experience, and what an unreal, multiple world it must have seemed to him, after long months in face of the menacing desert of the enemy's lines, to arrive now through the swarming intrenchments and to perceive the enormous reserves crowding every hamlet and every village for miles back; where before, as far as his eyes could see, from day to day, not a human speck had broken the monotony! A couple of soldiers cut the brass buttons with the imperial crown from his shoulders. Captain X explained this manœuvre to me. The soldiers manufacture rings out of the steel rims of the enemy's shells, inserting in them the brass crown cut from the prisoners' buttons, which they send back as prized mementoes to

their families. We took several photographs, an officer exclaiming to the soldier who had him in charge:

"Stand up and show the difference between a French Poilu and a Bosche."

Which he did, amid much laughter.

There was something so feeble, so unwarlike, so piteously undestructive about this shattered, frightened young German, so evidently condemned by disease itself, that it brought home to us the grimness and the tyranny of war more than anything else we had seen.

Leaving the rest of the party behind, we started for Ablain St. Nazaire. If Betheny and Blangy had awed us with the spectacle of destruction and ravage, this village surpassed all that we had imagined. It lay literally in shreds, stark, twisted, a hideous skeleton, unrecognizable in shape. Every inch had run in blood, every shattered house had been a cemetery. The roofs and walls

were torn and tattered, as though so much flimsy cotton, as though a hurricane was still howling through them. We were now in the centre of a horse shoe of French batteries—the same tearing, tinny, traveling screech of shells crossing and recrossing constantly above our heads; winding no longer through houses and cellars, but through strewn heaps of débris, with immense splinters of masonry peeled off like so much timber.

We turned aside to visit an historic spot—the ruins of a house held for long months by the French, in the full teeth of a desperate resistance, while still the German lines ran on the slopes overhead, so close that at times only a wall divided them, across which they could hear each other conversing. At one corner we were shown the pump where for weeks the French had passed out pails on long sticks to take the water, at a spot literally swept by muskets. As we returned to

the main street, a wounded soldier was returning on a stretcher, one bloody arm exposed—a clammy, purple, repulsive mass of flesh—face tense with pain, teeth gritted, and glazed, unseeing eyes—a hero of a conquered trench, who had lain twenty-four hours before they could get him out. They carried him into the tented inclosure of the first aid, and through the uplifted flap I saw the surgeon hastily cutting away the polluted shirt from the lacerated body.

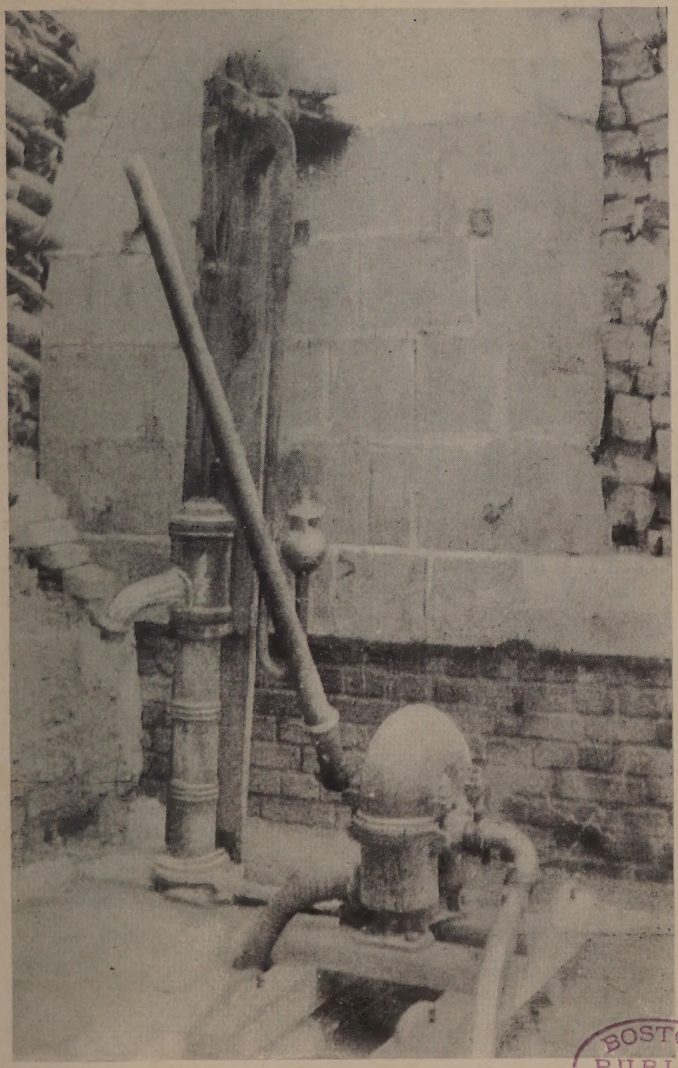
"How many have been brought in since last night?" our guide asked.

"Over two hundred."

"Seriously wounded?"

"About forty."

We went on, passing occasional bandaged stragglers returning from the fire. Half way through the village we turned aside again for an inspection of what had once been a château, slipping cautiously over a dishevelled meadow encumbered with heavy



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THE PUMP AT ABLAIN ST. NAZAIRE, WHERE ONLY THE WALL SEPARATED THE FRENCH AND THE GERMANS.

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TYPICAL SCENE IN CAPTURED GERMAN STRONGHOLD.

German barbed protections, solid chevaux de frize, with heavy, wicked teeth, like the jaws of an animal trap. The crumbled ruins of the château were surrounded by a marshy, slime-covered moat, captured German trenches still visible beyond them in the scummy jungle protected by the same hideous iron man-traps. And yet, in the face of shell and machine gun, over this thorny, trapped refuse through which we clambered with difficulty, slipping at every step, soldiers of France had swarmed victoriously! How was it humanly possible! I stood shaking my head, absolutely unable to believe it.

From where we were the three great hills of the Notre Dame de Lorette slope extended stark before our eyes, so denuded, so white from the iron sowing, that they seemed like bleached bones shining in the sun. These three hills, so insignificant on the map, had represented three battles of

the Civil War. I asked what had been the German losses in this vast cemetery.

"Over a hundred thousand," said an officer.

It is such an incident as this that makes you comprehend the slow, bleeding-to-death process of this locked warfare—that it is not a war of geographical advance, but of subtraction, of deadly mathematical reckoning up at each week's end.

Back once more in the village, we heard a new sound, the warning, whirring sound of German shells crossing above us among the French. At the first note we stopped, ready to take to a boyau, listening, wondering—was the village about to be bombarded, or what was the destination? The shell continued, and a dull explosion came at the end of an appreciable moment—then a second and a third in rapid succession. Captain X. made a wry face, cursing under his breath:

"It's the automobile. They're shelling our automobile."

That might be true, but after this morning's experience it was no pleasant sensation to stand there, knowing that we were in the direct line of the German fire, wondering at what moment the range might shorten and the shells come exploring the stone streets.

We continued, however, to the end of the village, for a visit to what had been the casino of the German officers. Here we found an underground cellar, coquettishly fixed up as a club room, papered and generously lit by lamps, with a piano at one end, where a month before the enemy's staff gathered at cards or to troll out their drinking choruses. The casino was now converted into a station for the Red Cross, bandages everywhere and cases of instruments. While we were still conversing, a group of wounded arrived, and we ceded our place. Outside, in the court-

yard, two of the hospital corps, with the Red Cross on their arms, were standing with great tin receptacles strapped to their backs, nozzles in their hands—back from sprinkling quicklime on the latest corpses. A soldier, slightly wounded in the arm, returning to be bandaged, was excitedly discussing the results of the night's attack in which he had participated.

"We've got them! We've got them! Only we must send reinforcements. If they'll send reinforcements, we'll clean the whole gang out to-night."

He was like a possessed maniac, with strange wild eyes and nerves tense to the breaking point. In his enthusiasm he began to discuss with our officers explaining what should be done, fearful lest an opportunity should be lost. The officers answered him fraternally, calming him with ready answers, patting him on the shoulder like a child.

From here I got perhaps the quickest sensation of battle. The wounded returning, the Red Cross stretchers going and coming, the soldier from the thick of it, still uncontrolled, seeing visions of carnage and blood lust, added to the indescribable uproar of the cannonade, brought it all so close that it seemed as though, at the next moment, we would be caught up and swept headlong into the caldron itself.

As we returned, we met the General of the Division, who warned us from the open streets into the boyaux, and confirmed our surmises that our arriving car had unchained a persistent cannonading of the hill and highway.

Back at the foot of the Grand Eperon we found that our party had witnessed an extraordinary spectacle from the shelter of the bomb-proof. No sooner had our automobile spun down the open slope and turned toward the sheltering edges, than the Ger-

man batteries had opened fire. From their point of vantage they had witnessed the explosion of a dozen shells. The Germans, with mathematical precision, as though in confident display of their command, planted one shell at the beginning of the lower road, one shell at the turning, and one farther up, repeating this operation again and again, with the same progressive accuracy, tearing large holes in the road. One shell struck on the highway and ricocheted for yards before its ultimate explosion. This demonstration of their ability was quite convincing. We unanimously decided to make a wide detour on foot, a journey of a mile or so, which led us through an artillery encampment at the moment when the cooks were busy at the steaming kettles.

When we rejoined our cars we found them all there, the chauffeur we had left behind having quietly returned over the bombarded route, reporting the road wrecked in

half a dozen places. We congratulated him, without, however, the slightest personal regret, the possibility of remaining *en panne* on that open climb having been at the bottom of every thought.

The quiet of the rear, the calm of routine lives, gradually replaced the din and fury of the front. Groups were lounging in the villages, mingling with the women and young girls, playing with the children. Soldiers were returning on hay racks from the long day in the field. At other turns we found crowds playing football, shouting and clamoring. We stopped presently to quench our thirst in a mixture of coffee and water. In the inside of the village buvette three soldiers at a table in the corner were reveling over the luxury of little steaks which they had cooked on the nearby stove. Upon our arrival they volunteered to help the landlady make us fresh coffee. I joined them for a moment, and found them in the best of

spirits. The food was good enough (in fact, this is the testimony of all the soldiers), only they were gourmets, they needed to whet their appetite a little, hence the steaks. They entertained a great contempt of the German soldiers in front of them, or, rather, a proud confidence in their own superiority.

"If it wasn't for their artillery they wouldn't stand long before our poilus."

Man to man, it is astonishing the pride and self-confidence of the French soldier.

Another bearded private came in with a great kettle of cauliflower and potatoes which he was boiling down into a soup for a group of comrades in the other room. I joined them. The cook was a volunteer, a man of 45.

"I have a son in the Argonne," he said proudly—"a corporal already."

"And you are all absolutely confident?" I asked.

He swore confidently in answer, a sol-

dier's oath. Then, like the *vieux grognards* of the empire, of whom Napoleon said: "They grumble but they march," he added:

"All the same, we mustn't attack too much. They'll never pass our lines. We ought to hold them, shoot them down. They're such fools; they come on like rabbits."

"And the winter campaign?"

"We're ready. We have known it would come, for months."

"That isn't what they tell the German soldiers."

"Well, we'll see how they like their surprise."

"So no one talks of quitting?"

"Now? Never. Oh, it's hard. You can't say that it isn't hard. But what must be done, must be done. We must give them their little taste of war at close quarters, and when we finish we want it over. We don't want to begin again."

"And you all understand that?"

"Of course."

We left a few francs with the landlady, to add a good bottle of wine to these rare feasts, knowing that their pride would not permit of a direct offer. And as we went, for the last time, we said fervently, as they rose to salute:

"Good-bye and good luck for the war."

And a chorus answered quietly, as though an answering prayer:

"Merci bien, messieurs! Esperons!"

A VISIT TO JOFFRE

CHAPTER VII

A VISIT TO JOFFRE

MY visit to General Joffre fortunately did not come until the end of my visit to France. During my two trips to the front I had had abundant opportunity to study the morale of the armies of the Republic. The experience had been a revelation. The French army impressed me as a battleship stripped for action—everything sacrificed and thrown overboard, nothing to count except the final issue. I found it organized in accordance with the most modern and scientific business methods. Every man must count; every uniform must serve its utmost capability; every economy in barracks and construction, short of military necessity, must be made with the one idea that the war is a test of economic forces and

that therefore, beyond holding the sunken maze of fortified trenches securely, another result must be sought—to hold it with the least expense. A veteran of our Civil War, seeing a regiment pass returning from the front, might believe himself face to face with the army of Grant or Lee—the same shaggy beards, the same uncouth, grimy, patched, and ragged uniforms, the same lack of the jingle and sparkle of military parade lost in the grim business of war. The valetlike etiquette of peace, with the boot polishing and the trimness of parade (details insisted on in the belief that they are requisites of discipline), have disappeared before a higher morale—the discipline of loyal, proud, and free men who, consecrated to the task of ridding their country of an invader, have, in the spirit of equality and fraternity, cast away all trivial forms. Of the almost fanatical love of their officers by the men, and the

religious sense of fellowship of the leader toward his children of the spirit, I had had a hundred personal testimonies. An intimate friend, Baron d'H—— (a lovable, charming idler in peace, turned into a grim and simple crusader by the miracle of purification and sanctification which has swept over France), had distinguished himself as a lieutenant in the storm-swept battle before Soissons, was twice mentioned in general orders and offered a captaincy. But this meant a transfer to another regiment. He wrote, declining:

"I have lived with these men through eight long months. They belong to me and I belong to them. I wish either to die with them at our post of duty or to return to Paris victorious at their head."

Remembering such personal instances, I understood the fervor of a returned veteran of the trenches haranguing a knot of new levies advancing to their post of danger,

who, breathless and trembling with emotion, was crying:

"I tell you that our officers are the finest men ever put on the earth. It's a privilege —I tell you, a privilege—to die with them."

Through the long corridors of the Val-de-Grâce Hospital, back in Paris; in the meager, hasty shelters of the *écloppés,* where the exhausted and slightly wounded were recovering their spent breath, as it were, preparatory to a speedy return; in the exalted atmosphere of the little underground fort at Betheny, where the *chasseurs-à-pied* had vowed to hold what they had conquered until the end, scorning to be relieved; in the riddled trenches, among the refuse at Blangy, twenty yards from the German fortifications; over the Notre Dame slopes, where the frightfulness of destruction seems beyond the power of human imagination to comprehend; in the storm-ridden village of Ablain Saint-Nazaire, with the wounded

arriving from the raging conflict itself—everywhere I had looked with reverent eyes on the glorious spectacle of civilized men (Republicans, loving the same ideal of liberty as ourselves) exalted in a war of noble ideals, united in unmilitaristic obedience: a great-hearted, simple family.

Through these manifold grim channels it seemed to me that the figure of the "Great Father," General Joffre, had come gradually closer. When the simple soldiers had spoken of him, it had been with a reverent faith in some superior, kindly wisdom. If they still held only the approximate line of the winter, it was because he knew best—because in his humanity as a simple republican citizen he was asking them for patience and steady nerves rather than the hazardous sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of lives for a spectacular plunge. Critics might grumble and fret—they, the simple soldiers, held their faith unshaken.

It was with these gathered, thronging impressions that I went to this interview as the crowning experience of a privileged exploration into the souls of a great-hearted people. In company with Commander C—— of the War Department I left Paris in the early afternoon for the long run forward to our destination, to the heart of the great military machine, to the unique privilege of conversing face to face with the man to whom a united France had given the absolute direction of four million of her soldiers, in perfect faith in his genius and citizenship, untormented by personal ambitions—the colossal courage that from Charleroi to the Marne reorganized an army in retreat, freed militant France from political tampering, broke general after general, division commanders and colonels by the hundred, personal friends, old comrades (brilliant minds faltering for a moment in face of the actual test); purged the French army of the nec-

essarily attendant weaknesses and errors of democracy—not in the easy space of months, as during our Civil War, but in a few agonizing weeks, with the hot breath of the victorious German sweep on the retreating flanks; and once his task accomplished, turned at the Marne, and, from Belfort to Paris, at every point checked or drove back the great German military machine and saved democratic civilization, as Charles Martel rolled back Saracen invasion and kept Europe undefiled.

We arrived, by well-guarded roads and past vigilant sentinels, at X——, before a modest, three-story country house with a meager garden. Once there an air of simplicity pervaded everything. No sentries were without, no bustle of officers thronging the garden. We went into the inner hall before we met an orderly—a powerful, leonine figure of a mountaineer, rather a concierge than a guard. No one else was in the outer

hall—absolute quiet and calm throughout the house, unbroken save for the low, continual murmur of officers at the telephone in an opposite room, the center of prodigious activity, where at every instant, from Switzerland to the coast, messages poured in from each sector of embattled trench.

I had but a short five minutes to wait. I remember Lieutenant S—— saying to me:

"Remember the look in his eyes—the eyes especially are extraordinary."

The next moment I was signaled, and, entering a library in the back, found myself in the presence of General Joffre.

I had at once the impression of meeting the simplest and most approachable of men. Many years before I had met President Cleveland, and I still remember the impression that he made upon me as he came into the room, in slippered feet, talking to me as naturally as though he were the humblest and most undistinguished of citizens. Yet

this unconscious, direct serenity, completely devoid of the dramatic magnetism and conscious authority one expects to find in greatness, left a memory still clear; I was awed, even unaccountably embarrassed, in the presence of this simple, great man, utterly unconscious of producing an effect.

The similarity between Joffre and Cleveland struck me immediately, not only in the massive quality of the man's physical force —something implanted and immovable about the attitudes of the body—but particularly in his quiet loftiness of vision, which seemed to have lifted him so high in the temple of the nation's sanctified heroism as to have left him forgetful of self. This man had not two attitudes, one for his family and his intimate friends and one to astound and electrify the multitude. I found myself in the presence of a republican, of a Cincinnatus, a man of the type of Grant and Lincoln, sobered by responsibility,

haunted by the nation's sorrows—a type of republican such as nations sometimes find in the purity of their youthful strength, rarely in the middle age of their achievement. I do not intend to idolize him—that would be a most offensive thing to him. History will judge later the qualities of his genius. What was elevating to me in this interview was the fact that he appeared to me to be the product of the nation itself. There was nothing of the war lord about him—of the dramatic wielder of destinies that sweeps ahead the easily tricked popular imagination. He was not the great man as the people dramatically imagine greatness. He impressed me as a man made great by circumstances and the capacity of a nation to engender great men in its times of need—a man who had grown and would grow in vision, as Lincoln grew. I felt immediately the calm, untroubled by personal considerations, which possessed him. When

he spoke of great events and great sacrifices there was a reverence in his face toward the responsibility he bore which one sees on the face of a child approaching religious mysteries. I should say that he was above all a man of deep reflection and unshaken decision; a man so possessed with the one result sought as to be able to surround himself with a cabinet of brilliant, audacious spirits as well as those who build slowly and without risk—to hear and weigh each conflicting opinion, to appreciate each, and to take his decision unemotionally. He struck me as the supreme court of common sense. Conversing with him, you received the feeling that he would never risk all on the cast of a die or put his faith in sudden inspiration. He is out to win, to risk nothing; absolutely relentless, seeing war tactics not as a conflict of genius but as an irresistible acceleration of the momentum of great bodies.

His full-face, traditional photograph is fairly characteristic. The head is capacious and set with the massiveness of a block; the eyebrows and gray mustache heavy and overhanging. The eyes are indeed remarkable, the left eyelid slightly drooping, conveying thereby a sense of the oppressed imagination before the daily spectacle of a nation's sorrow. He looks at you steadily and with kindness, yet there is in the look something detached, a sort of spiritual disembodiment, the soaring gaze of one who feels himself called to perform a staggering task—the look, I imagine, that might have been in the eyes of the inspired and simple child of the soil, the Maid of Orléans. The shoulders are strong, the chest thick, and the body inclined to corpulence. Large as these proportions are, the head seems larger in comparison. The impression is one of massive and silent strength. There is nothing of the traditional Latin type: eloquent,

mentally rapid and impassioned, emotionally mercurial. He is neither nervous nor electric. It is the mind, divorced from the tongue, that is ceaselessly at work.

Relying on erroneous reports, I said: "I am glad you speak English."

He shook his head.

"No, I can read a few words with difficulty, that's all; though I passed through your country over thirty years ago on my return from Indo-China."

Fortunately, as I had gone to school in France, I could converse with him in his own language—a fact which he received with pleasure.

The first subject which we discussed was the ever-present one in my mind, democracy —fortunately for me, for it was an opening which found an instant response.

"General Joffre," I said, "in my country we stand to-day divided into two distinct groups, despite all the ominous warnings of

this conflict. First, there is an awakened group which has peace as its ultimate ideal of the progress of civilization, but which, face to face with the realities of modern history, is seeking to arouse the country to the necessity of military preparation; second, a group of convinced idealists who believe that the establishment of an army—in fact, the very confidence of military preparation—is a constant incitement to war. Their opposition to a program of defense is based on the principle that the discipline of military organization undermines the spirit of democracy. Many a time I have wished that the peace propagandists could have been here to see what I have seen—the democracy, undiminished and unimpaired, in the French army."

"That is our great moral resource," he said instantly. (When he speaks, he speaks slowly, rather seeking his words than carried away by the sound of his own words.)

"Where a nation is truly republican, I do not think there is any danger to the spirit of democracy in military preparation."

He stopped for a moment and added:

"It is not simply the need of preparation for war, but the need of self-discipline. In a republic where the spirit of individual liberty is always strong, military service gives the citizen a quality of self-discipline which he perhaps needs to respect the rights of others as well as to be able to act in organized bodies. If you have the dread of military service in America, it may be because you are looking at the German ideal rather than at the French. The art of war is practically the same everywhere; the same general principles are taught everywhere. The distinction between the French army and the German is a difference in the conception in the rôle of the soldier. The theory of the Germans is to make of the soldier a machine. They do not wish him to think for

himself. By their discipline of fear they rob him of initiative and make his movements absolutely mechanical, entirely subject to the will of his officer. That is why they must attack in close formation. To carry out this theory, the officer class has been made into a Brahmin caste. To perpetuate this kind of feudal supremacy, the officer does not converse directly with the privates, but transmits his orders through the agency of a intermediary class—sergeants and corporals. You have been to the front, in the trenches and in the camps. You must have seen how different it is with us."

"Nothing has impressed me more," I answered, "than your spirit of fraternity. In fact, if I had not seen its practical working out, I might believe, as many hasty observers must, that it could be subversive of discipline."

"No, no," he took up warningly, "that is

not so. Our discipline is not the discipline of fear. We do everything that we can to impress the necessity of this spirit of fraternity. Our soldiers are treated as intelligent human beings, capable of thinking for themselves in great crises. Every day men come from the ranks into leadership. The private soldier is an inexhaustible store from which at necessity we can replenish our staff of officers. They, in turn, are taught that their soldiers are their children; nothing that the private soldiers need or desire must be indifferent to them; they watch over their comforts and necessities, share their food with them and endure the same hardships. They live together as a great family. When we make a charge, the officer leads his men always—no one has to tell him that—and he does not need to look around to see if he is followed."

I interrupted, to cite to him the incident of my friend, Lieutenant d'H——, and his

refusal to leave the men he had fought with to accept promotion in another regiment. General Joffre's face lit up with a characteristic touch of pleasure and kindness, almost the pride of a father. He may have no nerves, but he has extreme sensibility. He nodded:

"Yes, that happens all the time. Our officers cannot be separated from the men with whom they have fought. You understand, then, why 'Mes Poilus' will follow such officers anywhere."

"In the final crisis," I suggested, "I should think this loyalty might be a determining factor."

The affectionate smile disappeared in a sudden seriousness.

"It will. Whatever happens, the French army will never crack. It did not in the first unequal weeks; it never will. When the day comes that the German army must retreat in the face of defeat, it is quite pos-

sible that when their theory of discipline—the discipline of fear—is placed to that final test, the result may be a rout."

I then put to him the question that had been uppermost in the minds of Americans from the beginning:

"General Joffre, was the destruction and desolation wrought in Belgium and the north of France simply the work of individuals or the result of a fixed policy?"

"A fixed policy," he said instantly. "The policy of terrorism was as coldly and calmly determined upon as the decision to violate the neutrality and break the national word of honor, in the invasion of Belgium. It is the German military theory of invasion, decided upon by the German military leaders, that the way to break down the resistance of the country you are invading is to devastate it, burn its villages, shoot civilians on trumped-up pretexts, or drive them before your own troops to stop the fire of the

enemy, as they did in numerous cases with us, in the belief that human beings can be terrorized to the extent that they will prefer to surrender rather than risk the horrible results of resisting the invader."

He stopped for a moment, and added soberly:

"The proof that it was a settled policy of military tactics is that from the moment they realized that they might lose—that is, say, after the Battle of the Marne—they stopped it."

What he said only confirmed the testimony of twenty men, leaders in politics and public opinion—a characteristically generous French opinion that distinguishes between the German nation and the conscience-oppressing military caste which places no consideration of humanity in its textbook of military necessity.

"And the question of peace," I asked—"if it is not indiscreet?" Then, as I saw

him hesitate, I added quickly: "I ask that because there are many well-meaning but unfortunately misinformed persons in America who believe that the cause of humanity is best served at the present moment by seeking an immediate peace."

He answered with more solemnity and earnestness, with a flash of the strong, underlying mental stubbornness for the right which is characteristic:

"Peace to-day would be a crime toward posterity. It would only be an armistice in which every nation would continue feverishly to prepare for war. The French nation is too intelligent to deceive itself or to be deceived. We are not fighting a nation with the same ideas as our own, but a nation drunk with the idea of imperial domination, a nation which believes that in the progress of the world there is no place for little nations. The decision as to whether Europe will continue as free and individual

states will be made in this war alone. Either we win the right now to continue democratic and peaceful, or we surrender Europe to the imposition of an imperial idea. You will find, wherever you go, that the French people know this. You will find them absolutely of one opinion. They are prepared for anything, and they know what the issue is. We do not need to lie to our soldiers. No matter how long the war lasts, it will be fought out until we have conquered the right to leave a heritage of peace to our children."

"Of course, another winter's campaign," I suggested, "will never be as frightful as the last one."

"No," he said, "it will be very different."

Into his face again came that look of affectionate solicitude, as though the needs of the humblest soldier were the first concern of the great commander of organization and tactics—a look that made me understand why the army adores him.

"That is one thing we have been working on for months. It will be very different. We are prepared now for many things. One thing especially we will try to avoid—the standing in water and ice for days and weeks."

I changed to another subject:

"General Joffre, with us we consider that the sinking of the *Lusitania* was above all things a moral and spiritual tragedy for the German race: a frightful unmasking of the extent to which a military despotism had crushed the instincts of the individual conscience. We cannot conceive that an officer could be found to obey such an order. We say freely that were it conceivable that an American commander should receive such an order he would prefer to blow out his brains rather than to have his name soiled for all time with the memory of such assassination."

The answer he gave me was substantially

the answer I had received from every public man in France:

"No French government would impose such an order, knowing that it could not be obeyed. We cannot give inhuman commands to human beings. With us the army is not the master but the servant of the nation, and the nation reposes on a public conscience which is the sum of the consciences of its soldiers; and our responsibility to that conscience is higher than any military necessity. No such order could ever be given by a French commander"—he stopped and added significantly—"nor many other orders."

Underneath the great working head of the multiplied military activity the citizen of the Republic had shone forth—the idealist for whom honor, humanity, and moral pride were not simply figments of peace, but the inspiring, ennobling incitements to heroism in war.

Several times in this long interview, parts of which cannot be reproduced, General Joffre stopped to recite individual traits of heroism, his expression changing instantly to one of tender pride, as though in a constant contemplation of the growing hideousness of war's realism these flights of the soul above the selfishness and egoism of the day were the inspiration in which to find strength and hope.

I repeated to him the answer a little working woman had given me in one of the crowded workrooms of Paris—a woman who had lost one son and a brother already —who, answering my question as to whether her courage was still as strong as ever, had replied proudly:

"We women must keep up our courage, monsieur, to give courage to our men."

He looked away a moment, profoundly touched, and then said, with great feeling:

"Oh, our women! They are sublime!

No one ever knew how heroic they could be —not even they themselves. There will be no flinching there. Even the mothers who have lost their sons, their only sons, will not permit us to stop now. They have made their sacrifice without complaint—only it must not be a useless sacrifice."

When it came time to end the interview, and I had obtained his consent to publish it, which I did only with the greatest difficulty, there came on his face for the first time a look of sudden timidity.

"I don't like interviews," he said, a little shyly, as though this were a region of which he understood nothing. "I am afraid of them. It must be on one condition—in what you write, don't make me too prominent. What France is doing is too big; I do not want people to talk about me any more than the others; I am simply one citizen of the Republic."

THE TRUTH ABOUT FRANCE

CHAPTER VIII

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IF French diplomacy has been unjustly held to have made any mistake in this war, it has been in the early determination to make no propaganda in the United States. The reasons for this decision were both diplomatic and sentimental. France promptly saw the reaction which followed Germany's blundering attempt to influence American opinion, and determined to avoid those dangers, perhaps not realizing the difference between a propaganda based on education and the tactful repetition of historical facts and actual accomplishments and a propaganda condemned to absurdities and trickery by the nature of the actions it was trying to obscure or condone. Beyond this the French

are an exceedingly proud nation, not given to boastfulness, who believe that the accomplishment of their duty toward civilization needs no advertisement; that it is for us, a great, liberty-loving republic, cherishing the same ideals, to recognize with ardor what republicans have achieved under staggering odds, without having our attention claimed by the methods of a barker at a country circus. In the end this proud reticence accomplishes its own reward. There are signs today of a great awakening as to the true significance of this world war and the unequal and unsought responsibility borne by the Republic of France.

Unfortunately our sources of news are English. With the exception of one cable, all lines of communication pass their censorship. When an American magazine or newspaper desires information about France it frequently commissions an Englishman to inform it. With the best intention in the

world this correspondent sees France, not with our eyes, but with his own. Two great agencies of publicity have existed in this country, English and German. Hearing little or nothing of the cause of France, the American public (which has always misconceived the virility and stability of its sister republic) has come to look upon this war as a conflict between two greedy commercial nations—England and Germany—at times inclined to accept the convenient and lately announced assertion of the Germans' love and admiration of the French and their regret that military necessity has forced them to attack a future ally. This is not simply a misconception of the significance of this war, but an error that has deprived one republic of the legitimate pride and thrill of enthusiasm that it should have in the triumphant demonstration that a nation can stand free and republican, able to maintain its national existence, even when threatened by

the most scientifically organized military despotism the world has known. It is only to-day, with a sense of defrauded enthusiasm, that we perceive that where the colossus of Russia has been found corrupt and short-sighted, and the great world empire of England is still struggling desperately to awaken its dormant masses to its imperiled unity, France has emerged from the test as completely unified as Germany—is a greater nation, since not one republican ideal has been sacrificed, not one individual conscience smirched, not a national oath dishonored, nor an ideal of humanity bartered for "military necessity."

The American people have understood little of the great-hearted Republic of France. For years we have believed her in decadence. For this there were many plausible reasons. The novels that have told the world of a frothy Parisian society (a society no more French than New York is American) have

pictured to us a nation in decadence. Those who have visited the capital itself have returned with a tourist's impression of frivolity and egotism, forgetting that in Paris you have the back parlors of depravity of the entire civilized world, which congregates there to do what it does not dare do at home. I remember once asking a group of Frenchmen of the aristocratic boulevardier type how many habitués of restaurants and coulisses you would find among the Parisians themselves—not men who dropped in at the Café de Paris, Ciro's, or the Abbé de Thelême once a month, but who lived habitually in this atmosphere. There were six present, men of fortune and reputation and themselves of the class of which I had asked an estimate. Their answers varied from 200 to 350!

Politically we have seen France, despite noteworthy social advance, badly governed by a shifting, clamoring succession of vain-

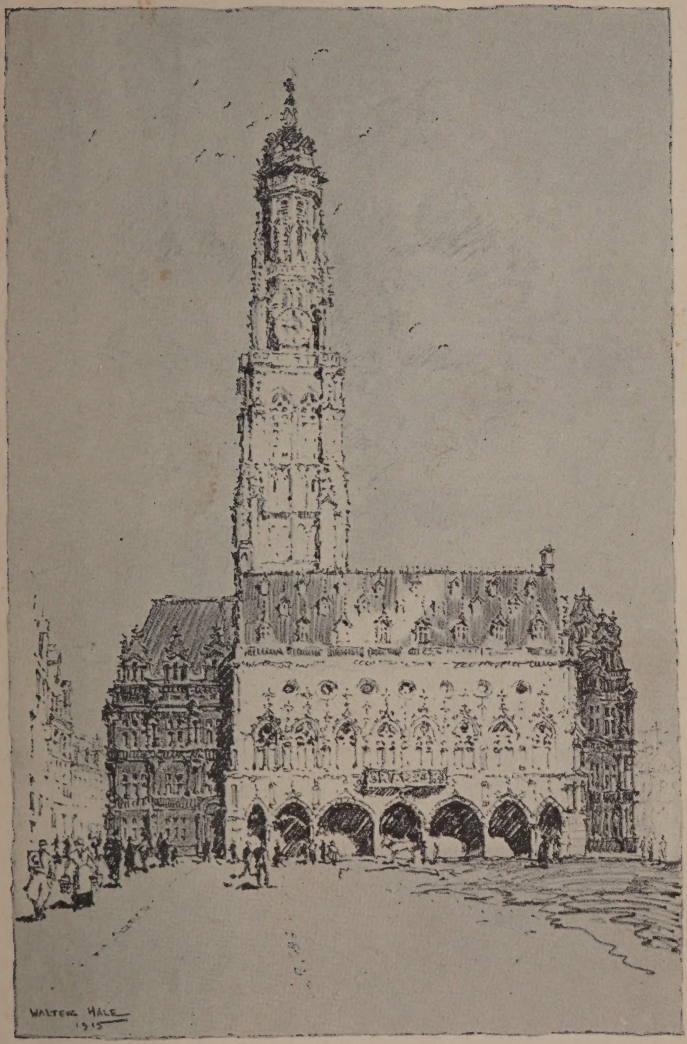
glorious orators, with only an occasional leader of authority with the instinct not for literature but for governing. Yet this frantic mob of debaters had as little significance as the mongrel ephemeral society of Paris itself. Underneath, the great French people continued sober, rich, happy, and increasingly intelligent. France was like a great *pot au feu*—nourishing and bountiful underneath, with the grease of society rising to the top.

At the beginning of the war France, despite inherent strength, did not compare with Germany either in material preparation or in efficient organization. When history comes to be written it will be known just how lacking France was in certain military equipment and just what internal handicaps she had to overcome at the moment she was staggering under the shock of the invader. France mobilized two million men while Germany mobilized six.

France found herself facing the test of her existence with every evil of democracy uppermost. The supreme direction of military tactics was divided between General Joffre and the Minister of War. The invasion of Alsace was a political move. The advance to Charleroi was a sentimental debt paid to Belgium, and there are indications that, at one critical point at least, in the retreat the orders received by a certain general from the Minister of War and the generalissimo were in direct conflict. The army was to a certain extent commanded by leaders who had reached their station through a measure of political encouragement. Moreover, there undoubtedly existed among certain political leaders a distinct though small representation which, after Charleroi, honestly and patriotically believed that resistance to German invasion was futile, and that the higher patriotism consisted in saving France, its cities and its

unravaged fields, by acquiescence in German domination. Keep these facts in mind, and remember likewise the muddling, and worse, which characterized the opening year of the Civil War and, more recently, our first moves against Spain. Then you may comprehend the gigantic task performed by Joffre from Charleroi to the Marne.

From Charleroi to the Marne Joffre not only reorganized the French army, but, to the logic of military necessity, he readjusted the French parliamentary machine, and this to-day is what a certain obstinate group of parliamentary adherents, with their eyes still on the Revolution, cannot forgive him. At Charleroi, with complete disaster looming ahead, with certain troops on which he could not depend and officers who had failed, and in spite of ministerial interference, Joffre assumed complete military direction and set about the task of reorganization while waiting for his reserves to be



ARRAS BEFORE.

From the drawing by Walter Hale.

ARRAS AFTER.

From the drawing by Walter Hale.

hastily equipped and effectively mobilized. He broke generals by the dozen—old personal friends, comrades in other compaigns, brilliant class tacticians who had failed at the practical test, men who begged for another chance—he retired generals of division, colonels and majors by the hundred; he regrouped his forces with a new knowledge of their dependability. All this was done during the most desperate retreat the world has known, while the German cohorts, realizing the preciousness of time, were being driven by the discipline of fear at a breathless pace which seemed beyond the power of human nature to continue. Yet by the time the Marne had been reached Joffre had performed his miracle. He had the French army *ready*. He selected his ground, accepted a general engagement, and in the first clash after preparation, completely and decisively defeated the great German military machine—saving France

and the map of Europe. For the battle of the Marne was not, as we first believed, the result of a lucky counterstroke by an unexpectedly gathered army from Paris thrown on Von Kluck's flank, but a carefully planned line of battle announced beforehand, where the French armies, at every vital point, did what was asked of them, checking and later repelling the enemy at Verdun and Nancy, flanking them at the Ourcq and driving irresistibly and brilliantly under General Foch at Von Bülow's army, separating it, flanking it, hurling it into the marshes, and driving it back in disorder. From the Marne on, France has maintained her supremacy, repelling the next great German drive at the battle of the Lisière, and in the long months of trench fighting (with the exception of Soissons) obstinately and vigorously advancing at a dozen points until the time came for the powerful offensive of this fall.

So much for France's military accomplishment, achieved at a period of incompleted preparation and a lack of supplies. To-day with 2,500,000 men on the line, and 1,600,000 in depots, the class of 1916 yet to come, with every village and hamlet for thirty miles back of the trenches bursting with reserves, the resources of France have hardly been scratched.

Economically what France accomplished in the first year of the war by the miracle of improvization is almost beyond belief. After the German invasion France found herself with her great industrial region and three-quarters of her metallurgical factories in the hands of the enemy; for the violation of Belgium was not simply the easy road to Paris, but the way to the heart of economic France. Despite this loss of her good right arm and shorn of her former resources, in the eleven months that England was blundering and muddling, France rose eco-

nomically, improvising and achieving this incredible result: Not only was she able to supply her own needs, but she found in the richness of her strength enough to give to England, to Russia, to Serbia, to Italy, and even to Rumania. Her resources of capital met the same emergency.

Internally, every section has established its working rooms for women out of employment, either providing them with free meals or furnishing food for a pittance. Every mother or head of a family unable to procure work receives 1.25 francs a day, with a slight addition for each child. All rents have been suspended. All religions and all political beliefs have met, in absolute harmony, for the first time in the history of France, and formed the great central body known as the Sécours-National, on whose central committee figure the chief Catholic dignitary of Paris, the chief Jewish rabbi, and the leading Protestant ministers, as

well as all forms of Republicans, Socialists, Clericals, and Monarchists. The Sécours-National has established cheap dinners and luncheons for the poor, and *cantines maternelles,* free wherever necessary, to all women in the process of childbearing. Beyond this, it has organized days of popular subscription, bringing in millions of francs, and distributes its help among all civilian activities that deserve it. Outside of this, the women of France mobilized in thousands to the call of the Red Cross, already prepared by six months to a year of medical training. These are but the organized expressions of national unity. Individual charity and performance are legion—private hospitals, private workshops, private training schools for the disabled soldiers; and all this ennobled by a national recognition of the decency of sorrow and a tragic concentration which has banished gay and voluptuous luxury from the eye and loud, rollicking frivolity from

the ear, and made of Paris a city of nuns and crusaders.

To the outer world this result appears like a miracle, and, in a sense, a miracle was performed, in a nation which twice before, in Jeanne d'Arc and the revolutionary heroes at Valmy, had shown itself capable of miracles.

There are three fundamental reasons for this startling demonstration of the national vitality and unity. First, the abiding spiritual heritage of the French Revolution. Above all, the progress of the French nation has been in the ardent pursuit of great and uplifting ideas. The prevailing sentiment to-day is the compensating conviction that they are warring for civilization and to free, not France alone, but all Europe, from the reactionary liberty-distrusting recrudescence of a feudalistic despotism. The last twenty years has been a precious period in republican progress. To-day the great

Revolution has at last achieved a completed republican type. Whatever the difference in their mental attributes and opinions, there is a striking similarity of type in Joffre, Poincaré, Delcassé, Briand, Viviani, Pichon, and other leaders. They are simple, divorced from the social imitativeness of the parvenu, and, above all, rigorously schooled. To-day, for the first time, the French masses are led by republican chiefs.

The separation of church and state, in an effort to liberate the schools and to procure a universal dissemination of education, has resulted in giving to the inherent qualities of stubborn frugality and indomitable patience the final touch of intelligence which makes the French people to-day the most informed and the most capable of reasoning. Where Germany had to trick its Socialistic masses into a violation of Socialistic Belgium by the pretended bugbear of Slavic aggression; where England had to appeal

to sentimental indignation, instead of baldly stating the reasons of self-interest which make a German occupation of Belgium an intolerable menace to the future of the British Empire, the French have been under no illusions; no lies have been dealt to them, no equivocations were necessary. The French masses clearly understand the character and ambitions of the new Pan-Germanistic theory of civilization, and where not a public man in England would have dared to appeal to the nation's intelligence on the proposition that the destruction of France meant the ultimate destruction of England, not a single French statesman needed to convince his people that to let Russia stand alone against Germany meant the subsequent subjection of France to the German idea and the German soldier. Dominated by ardent disciples of peace, seeking, as a nation, external peace to crown the internal progress of republican ideals, France went to the aid

of her ally without a dissenting voice. She did this because, from top to bottom, her masses were intelligent, even to the point of comprehending this indirect menace. Not only could they reason thus clearly, but they perceived, and perceive to-day, that this is a conflict of ideas, and as a nation that one hundred years ago shook the thrones of Europe with republican indignation, to-day they have gone with the same ardor into the conflict, comprehending that the future of democracy in Germany as well as in France is in their hands, and that no geographical discussion, no illusive peace, but a conclusive result, can settle this question.

To-day France is a republic, not as we are, of detached and self-centered individualists, but a republic of disciplined citizens, consecrated to the furtherance of the noble ideals of equality and opportunity, and holding these ideals so precious that they are

willing, whenever the test comes, to give their blood to the last man.

If in this political accomplishment are to be found the resources of strength which have astonished the world, in a deeper sense the stability, morally, of the French nation reposes in the dominant rôle which the idea of duty plays in each individual conscience. This idea of duty they have retained from their long contact with the Catholic religion, as, with their peculiar genius for assimilating the best, they have clung to the great spiritual enthusiasm for liberal ideas of the Revolution. The instinctive sense of duty of every Frenchman to the nation is the same sense of duty of every Frenchman to the needs of his family. The strength of France is indeed the strength of each individual family. Instead of the law of primogeniture, which has finally left the seeds of economic revolution in England, in the forced maintenance of enormous estates,

contrary to the natural laws of redistribution of wealth, the French system enforces a just division. It lays down the law that parents are responsible, even to vices and failings, for the children they bring into the world, and prohibits, beyond a negligible percentage, discrimination against any child. Not only do the children yield implicit obedience and deference to the parents, but the parents themselves are conscious of their further duty toward their children in providing them with ample marriage portions to permit their economic progress in the world. So close are these relations, economically, morally, and spiritually, that the sense of family obligation is the first social instinct in the French mind. Family honor and family progress are deeply allied here. To sacrifice oneself for one's family is but to be spiritually prepared to sacrifice oneself for the nation, its honor and its needs. With the first call to danger,

France—merged into one—ceased to be a nation of a million families. It is this unifying and ennobling sense of a great family that pervades all France to-day, in every army corps and every regiment, where officers and soldiers live in unconscious simplicity and fraternity, devoted to each other and to a common cause. This fundamental sense of duty, based on the family organization of the nation, was the spiritual reason that produced, on the 1st of August, 1914, the amazing spectacle of a France that had been judged volatile, bright, pleasure-loving, and superficial, uniting in one common impulse, grim, sobered, and sternly resolved to the last sacrifice.

Underneath all this, deeper than republican liberties or the religious sense of duty, is another reason—the love of the people for the fair land of France itself—perhaps the greatest of the three. It is the fairest land and the friendliest to man on the face of the

earth. To the humblest peasant each Frenchman is conscious of its beauty. He loves it with the memory of his fathers that have died to hold it. It appeals to the deepest flights of his poetical imagination. It is the true source of his passionate devotion to the beautiful and the free in the world of ideas and in the world of the rights of men. Of all the anecdotes I brought back, I love to remember most an incident which a sergeant told me of the first days of the mobilization. He was passing through a small city in a railroad section where every line was groaning under the passage of troops, in a scene of frenzied preparation, trucks arriving and discharging, vans being loaded to suffocation. In the midst of this turmoil a group of children were standing by a freight car, the oldest, a little tot scarcely seven, writing in chalk a message destined to traverse a land of embattled heroes. He approached and read what a

child's hand had written at a moment when men of genius were seeking phrases: *"J'aime la France!"*

What I set down here as to the conditions antecedent to the war and the causes which led to the great conflict is simply the record of what men at the head of the Government to-day, historians and publicists, have told me. I found them in substantial accord. I was amazed at the dispassionate generosity of their reasoning.

Germany could have had an alliance with France any time during the last ten years. Moreover, France sought it, and Germany rejected it for reasons which will appear. The growth of pacificism in France had been the steady growth of democracy away from the centralized ambitions of the state toward a higher conception of civilization, as an opportunity for the family to progress in liberty, education, and economic happiness. Despite much that has been errone-

ously written, Chauvinism in France, as represented by the desire of revenge for Alsace-Lorraine, was of little relative importance. The great rise of Socialistic ideas had for its external policy international peace as consonant with internal liberty. Jaurès himself repeatedly stated his belief that the German Socialists would never mobilize for an attack against France, though Bebel personally assured him that he was mistaken. Aristide Briand, the strongest man in France to-day, who, at the time of the Socialistic attempt to tie up the railroads, forced them to recognize the supremacy of the Government, told me personally that in the first eighteen months when he was Prime Minister he had labored incessantly for his favorite plan of a Franco-German *rapprochment,* believing that in it lay the permanent security of Europe. After eighteen months of ardent advocacy, he found that he had made not the slightest progress.

He realized that what the ruling class in Germany desired was not alliance but domination. He recognized his error, and, perceiving what was coming, made a complete about-face, and worked for the protection of France in the law of three years' service. Undoubtedly back of the German rejection of a Franco-German entente was the fear of the militaristic party of the pacific inclinations which might sweep the people in the event of the closer understanding of the two great Socialistic bodies. So imbedded in the national aspiration had become the ideal of peace in France that the three years' law, which was destined to save it, was fought at every turn, and its chief sponsors, including such men as Barthou and Joseph Reinach, were pursued by the resentment of their electors and defeated in their next campaign for the House of Deputies.

Despite this failure at a *rapprochement* with Germany, so far removed were the

French from any thought of war that they set about conscientiously to remove every cause of dissension in a series of arbitrations over conflicting spheres of influence. Not only had they come to an agreement as to their conflicting holdings in Africa, but hardly a few months before the actual breaking out of the war they sent a mission to Berlin which removed, as they believed, the last dangerous spark between the two nations, in an amicable understanding as to developments in Asia Minor. Not only on the eve of war were the French troops withdrawn ten kilometers from the frontier, but other precautions were taken under the greatest provocation. During this excited period the German ambassador, for what reason of provocation it is only fair to surmise, continued to show himself publicly in the streets and in the restaurants. Though recognized and seeming to invite a pretext for national aggression, he never received the

slightest insult. In fact, he was accompanied by special officers, who several times calmly warned the crowd that this was the German ambassador seeking to be publicly insulted; and the intelligent French crowd understood, shrugged their shoulders, and denied him the gratification. Despite all this, as President Poincaré personally informed me, and later embodied in his speech of July 14, Germany stated—even embodying it into its written declaration of war—that a French aeroplane had committed the first act of aggression in flying over Nuremberg; whereas even to-day, on this highest authority, the French do not possess an aeroplane capable of flying to Nuremberg and back. Incidentally, no Nuremberg paper of the date made the slightest allusion to the pretended occurrence.

The French attitude toward the early German atrocities is typical of their generous, intelligent outlook. They do not, de-

spite the greatest provocation, condemn the entire German people. They are convinced that the policy of terrorism inflicted on Belgium and northern France was the set theory of the military staff, undertaken to frighten Holland out of any natural inclination she may have had toward the passage of English troops, and in the erroneous belief that nations of freemen can be so terrorized as to prefer surrender of their principles to extermination. This misconception of the actions of free people the French believe due to the German aristocracy's own arrogant treatment of German popular protests in the past. The French look upon the Germans as a nation a hundred years behind them in political liberty, a nation still struggling to liberate its public conscience from a military Brahmanism.

Nothing is more significant of this generous attitude than an anecdote told me by Deputy X——. He was at the capital of

his department, waiting at a café on the evening of the mobilization, the air shaken with the ceaseless departure of long trains running on each other's heels. As he was sitting at a table, profoundly impressed by the patriotic uprising of this great Socialistic community, his chief opponent for years, a Socialist leader, came to him and, extending his hand, said frankly:

"Well, M. X——, you were right and we were wrong."

"Well, well, that is all forgotten," said the Deputy. "Those things are of no importance now. What is important is the way you Socialists have risen to the hour of our need."

And the Socialist, ardent and irrepressible advocate of peace, answered in words that, after all my investigations, I believe stand for the truest expression of what the French are fighting for.

"Since things are as they are with the Ger-

mans we have got to help them make their own revolution."

One of the unusual privileges I had to ascertain what the French people really thought on the varied sides of the great war was to be taken, as the guest of M. Gabriel Hanotaux, to a unique assemblage—the Wednesday luncheon of Gustave Le Bon, the philosopher and author of "The Psychology of the Crowd." There were present about thirty men, including M. Joseph Reinach, M. Etienne, former Minister of War, and M. Briand. They were significant as leaders of various phases of French activity—men who knew of their own knowledge data such as come late into public history.

Knowing the object of my mission, they decided to turn the luncheon over to me for my information. For three hours I put question after question, discreet and indiscreet, while they debated, often in disaccord,

usually arriving at a general conclusion. Their judgment on the determining factors that brought on the war was particularly informing. That German mysticism, or the Pan-Germanistic theory of predestination, was the underlying factor of unrest, and one that inevitably would have resulted in the European conflagration, is true. But the French do not believe that the explosion was timed for the particular period which finally resulted in this war. Pan-Germanism became a menace to the security of Europe, when to the feudal, acquisitive, and defensive instincts of the German military aristocracy there came into alliance the empire-dreaming, force-exalting school of German philosophers. The first direct result was the moral disintegration of the Triple Alliance. Italy saw the writing on the wall, and long before the necessity of a political act she comprehended the rôle of cat's-paw she would temporarily serve in the scheme

of race exaltation. Practically the Triple Alliance had ceased to exist with Italy's refusal to aid Austria in attacking Serbia after the Balkan War. What part of responsibility the German Emperor will bear in history is still a moot question. That up to a year before the war, as far as evidence permits, his desire was for peace, the French freely accord. At this time, however, a marked psychological change came over him. He had created in the military machine a German Frankenstein monster that threatened its author. The repeated menaces against France which had resulted in the maintenance of a shaky peace had left the Emperor under suspicion. He found his popularity impaired; and popularity to such a dramatic nature is the breath of existence. When he appeared in public assemblages he found them cold and indifferent, while side by side the Crown Prince, the military prophet, was acclaimed with

frenzy. That this had its effect upon his vanity seems probable. At any rate, the Kaiser, in his relations with French diplomacy in the year preceding the war, was a different personality, displaying a new attitude, mysterious and brooding, which aroused the liveliest apprehensions, and it was freely predicted that if a new cause for dispute arose between Germany and France the Kaiser would not be found on the restraining side of peace.

Internally there was another cause which urged the German military party to put everything to a final test. The rise of Socialism had produced an internal conflict which the intrenched aristocrats viewed with more fear than any danger of a foreign issue. Ten years more of rising democracy appeared more dangerous to them than any fear of foreign aggression. As I have stated, I believe this internal fear was the reason why German diplomacy would not

hear of a French alliance which would strengthen the enemies of militarism at home. Beyond this the German military propaganda had reached such a point of swollen costliness that if it did not produce results in five years it faced the certainty of a reduction by popular force.

While these internal conditions inclined the German Frankenstein monster to hasten the test, conditions in Europe made it appear that if an armed conflict must come, no moment would ever be more favorable than the present. Despite the new, perplexing equation of Balkan strength, England was on the eve of political and civil war. France, by the frank admission of Senator Humbert, was in a state of marked unpreparation, which would later be remedied. Russia had still to build her strategic railroads, while Germany, with the completion of the Kiel Canal, was at the maximum of her defensive strength. The moment

seemed felicitous for such a master stroke of intimidation as had resulted in Austria's seizure of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The men who discussed these matters before me were unanimous in believing that the Pan-Germanistic program meant an immediate crushing of France, with the acquisition of coveted territory, England as a second step, and Russia something to be settled with in the indefinite future. By making use of the Socialist hatred of the Russian political organization, and by skillfully playing upon the bugaboo of Slavic aggression, the German machine would make sure of national unity. The Socialists would march to "defend" Germany against a Russian "attack" where they might balk at assailing peace-loving, democratic France. German diplomacy was absolutely sure that England would not enter the war.

The decisive date was the council of war

of the German General Staff at Potsdam on July 27. On that day the German monster overruled the Frankenstein that brought it into being. Three times before it had been led to the brink and denied its opportunity. This time it insisted upon its right. Such is the French analysis.

Meanwhile, it is well to remember, France, in absolute loyalty to her ally and her word of honor, and without assurance of England's assistance, determined to go to war. At ten o'clock one night a telegram from Russia was received stating that war was inevitable in view of Germany's attitude and asking if she could count on France's assistance. The Cabinet was hastily assembled and at five o'clock in the morning, seven hours later, the answer was sent in the affirmative. There was no attempt to delay in order to be assured of England's attitude. No one had the slightest idea of what England would do. M. Denys

Cochin, leader of the Clerical party, with whom I lunched, told me that on the 31st of July, as he was leaving London, the French ambassador came to him and said:

"See the President to-night, and tell him from me that at this date I have absolutely no idea what England will do."

Meanwhile, in the face of a national crisis, four of the English Cabinet had handed in their resignations, two of which were subsequently withdrawn. On the 2d of August, while a party was dining at the house of the English ambassador in Paris, the crowd parading the streets below stopped directly below the windows, crying:

"Vive l'Angleterre!"

The English ambassador, intensely Francophile, said to his guests in the sudden lull which followed the incident:

"Two days from now they will be crying: 'Perfide Albion'!"

In Berlin Jagow had answered Cambon's question as to whether he had considered what would happen if England should decide to enter the war with a contemptuous: "England will not budge; of that we are absolutely certain."

So persuaded of this fact had been the German ambassador to England that a member of the English Foreign Office told me that on August 5, at the assembling of Parliament, when Sir Edward Grey came to his final declaration of war, the German ambassador, who was seated directly in front of my informant, collapsed, and that his friends were forced to watch over him for days, for fear that he might take his own life.

It is undoubtedly true that had England expressed her intention of assisting France immediately there would have been no war. This is no reflection upon the English nation. It is the colossal blunder of German

diplomacy, which, having a foreknowledge of the intended invasion of Belgium, could not reason out that, despite all sentimental opposition and disorganization in England, the empire could never tolerate for a moment even a temporary acquisition of the Belgian water front which would threaten its security as it had never been threatened before. Why England did not openly announce this compelling and alarming reason for self-defense as her trumpet call, rather than seeking justification on sentimental grounds, is another question.

After a year of the war, two great nations stand out, united in spiritual solidarity, organized to the last resource and the last man—France and Germany. And the astonishing thing is—a fact which is our own political justification and hope—that a nation conceived in our ideas, and not an imperialistic nation, has found its resources in the moral strength of freemen to equal the

long, mechanical preparation of imperial Germany.

England has fallen down to-day where France failed at Poitiers and Crécy. In those early tests of the social organization of the two nations England defeated France through the strength of her yeomen, because she opposed to the brilliant aristocracy of France, depending on the loyalty of its peasants—impoverished, ragged animals in a state of barbarism—a free peasantry, self-respecting, industrious, and educated to political rights.

To-day the most significant outstanding fact in this revealing war is the complete reversal of history which has been effected. The strength of France is the achieved strength of her masses, their enlightenment, their richness, and their consciousness of individual responsibility. The staggering weakness of England to-day is in the impoverishment, moral and economical, of her

masses. The workmen of France have asked no increase of wages. They are equal trustees in the national faith. They yield to no man a sense of higher responsibility. M. Corbin, one of the great manufacturers of ammunition, told me personally that he had never had an hour's trouble with his workmen, though he had had to improvise and increase his output fiftyfold. Moreover, in the first weeks, a delegation waited on him and asked him to take 4 per cent. from their wages each week and forward it to the assistance of their comrades at the front. For generations, despite the warning of her thinkers, England, through unscientific handling of her labor problems, has permitted her masses physically to degenerate through overwork and the spreading curse of drunkenness; while the survival of feudal fallacy of primogeniture, in maintaining and increasing enormous estates, instead of distributing equally the wealth of

the nation, has intensified class hatred and miscomprehension. To realize how serious is the condition that the great political leaders in England are striving to remedy, compare with the French attitude the attitude of the English workmen. I am willing to admit that all shortcomings are not on their side, and that there is much justification in their plea that they have in many cases, in face of an increase in the cost of living, been striking to have their fair share of the extra profits which have been coming to their employers. The greatest charge against them is that they are not intelligent; that to this day they do not realize the mortal seriousness of the struggle.

Remember also that after ten months, when the nation had been awakened to the need of high-explosive shells and to the frank admission that every resource of the empire would be taxed to avert disastrous defeat, the military leaders were still forced

to an extraordinary expedient to convince the laboring classes of the gravity of the situation. A group of labor leaders were invited to pay a visit to the fighting lines. For five days they were personally conducted, under the highest military patronage, and were given the opportunity to converse with soldiers by the hundreds, to put their own questions. At the end of this pilgrimage they returned and solemnly announced that it was quite true that the gallant boys at the front needed high-explosive shells—they had seen them themselves, and learned of their own knowledge! When you consider that this means had to be resorted to after the bombardment of coast towns, the sinking of the *Lusitania,* the use of poisonous gases, and the dropping of bombs on defenseless inland inhabitants, you may realize the gravity of the English situation.

Russia, supposed to be a semi-barbaric na-

tion, was able to put in force immediately the ban on vodka; France has forbidden the sale of absinthe; but England, the great modern empire, when she attempted to check the ravages of drunkenness, was forced to recoil. To-day probably the one thing that is keeping England from compulsory service, which she owes as a debt to her allies, is this fear of her sullen masses.

Yet, despite these facts, apparent to us, I found the French attitude toward the English one of generosity, enlightened always by their judicial sense. They do not belittle the services of England. They acknowledge unanimously their enormous debt to the English navy. They are loud in their praise of the adamantine resistance of the English army. Their failure to criticize, as we criticize, the inability of the English army to prove itself, after one year of preparation, an effective, aggressive instrument, is due to their thor-

ough comprehension of the long organization and technical application which are necessary for a modern army. Here perhaps is an element few reckon with when their attention is concentrated simply on the admitted lack of necessary ammunition. The great weakness (and one not to be wondered at) of the English army to-day is not in its regiments of soldiers, but in its lack of trained officers. Intelligence and not heroism or superior social position makes the effective officer needed in the technical operations of modern warfare. Unfortunately, in the hastily converted staffs of officers there is the same lack of intelligence, the same uncomprehension, which is the discouraging element in the mass of the people. The English officers still seem to believe, as they believed in the Boer War and as they believed at the time of Braddock's disastrous expedition, that the duty of an officer is to show his men how to die like a hero, and that

if enough of them die heroically England must win the war. It is a curious thing, this misconception of values; as though war has not always been heroism for the vanquished and superior intelligence on the side of the victors. We have fallen into the sentimental error of regarding a conflict between fifty Anglo-Saxons, armed with machine guns and repeating rifles, and say three thousand Zulus, as a conflict of heroes against staggering odds. The opposite is true. The true heroes are the naked Zulus, armed only with wooden spears, throwing themselves into the teeth of certain slaughter, while certainty is on the side of the little band of moderns.

All the French officers I met who have been in contact with the English army, in their outspoken admiration of English bravery, speak in wonder at the unnecessary loss of life.

To say that there is to-day no feeling of

criticism among the French toward the English is not completely true. The French, with all their patience and recognition of the handicaps under which the English are staggering, cannot understand the conduct of the English nation at home. Conscious that they are fighting England's cause, they cannot comprehend England's delay in pledging every resource and every man by placing the country on a military basis, mobilizing all effectives in compulsory service, putting an end to costly strikes, while at the same time regulating the profits of industries. Unless England can shortly find the unity to do this, I believe the after-results will be an abiding resentment not only among her allies but among her own colonies that will profoundly shape the course of her internal and foreign policies.

A glance at the map of Europe, at the great area of territory coveted by Germany in Belgium, the north of France, Russian

Poland, and Russia; by Russia in East Prussia and Galicia; by Austria on the Italian and Balkan frontiers; by England in Africa and Asia Minor, and by France in the little region of Alsace and Lorraine, will show the small compensation that this Republic expects in return for the unequal burden she is bearing. That the French now are determined on the recovery of the lost provinces is true, but it is not a greed for new territory.

They desire Alsace and Lorraine as their right, and as a monument to the heroism and sacrifice of the present. They are at war for the supremacy of ennobling ideas—to bring freedom to the German masses, after defending it for their own. "Since things are as they are, we have got to help them make their own revolution."

The word of France is *Peace for our children.* I have found this to be the invariable answer, whether my question was

addressed to General Joffre, to President Poincaré, to the soldiers in the trenches, the wounded in the hospitals, the working girls, still maintaining their courage in the work-rooms, or the women in black, who have already given of their sons. Peace to-day, they know, would mean the acknowledgment of the German domination of Europe, which would exist, in fact, in another decade. They believe, rightly, that peace in Europe depends upon the issue of democracy in Germany. Recognizing this, they are one and all determined to be rid of the hideousness of war by continuing this one until it shall have so come home to the German nation that they shall have felt the ravage and desolation which they have sown themselves; that the German people, exhausted, disillusionized, and betrayed, may rise in revolt against the militarism that has overreached their destiny.

Between the French masses and the Ger-

man masses there is much sympathy and profound admiration. Only a republic in Germany, or at least equal suffrage and a parliamentary responsibility which would bring the domination of democratic principles, can mean peace, and not fifty years of war. Were Germany to become republican, I believe that the weight of their sympathetic political bodies would be so decisive that within a decade France and Germany would be in alliance, with the object of maintaining the security of Europe on the basis of advanced Socialistic principles.

Were a drawn conflict or a German victory possible, France would undoubtedly be forced, in self-defense, into a more directly centralized form of government, either in the shape of a dictator or a president with powers even more increased than our own. Even in the case of a successful war, great constitutional changes may be expected. In the impatience and disgust of the people

at the present parliamentary control an apprehension of revolt is undoubtedly in the minds of those little politicians who are to-day futilely seeking to impose the absurdity of parliamentary control over military authority.

When the final outcome has been reached we may expect a splendid renaissance in Italy, the progress of Russian civilization advanced a century by the object lesson of German strategic preparation, and France and Germany as the two great unified and modern nations. What will become of England—whether her sun has set in her total inability to see the truth and place it before her people, or whether, casting aside all sentimental illusions and ingrained pride, she will find the moral courage for ruthless self-examination and reorganization—is the question that to-day looms above all others.

THE END

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